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GIFT OF

Paul H. Douglas

THE PERSONALITY OF JESUS

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KIRBY PAGE



The Personality of Jesus

The Personality of Jesus

*Pathways by Which
He Climbed the Heights of Life*

by ✓

KIRBY PAGE

Editor, The World Tomorrow

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Gift of Paul H. Douglas

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INTRODUCTION

Intellectual self-respect should impel a person to seek illumination concerning Jesus of Nazareth. Ignorance with regard to a figure who has made such a terrific impact upon history should be a source of embarrassment to an educated man. Literature, science, art, architecture, music, philosophy, ethics, and religion have all been profoundly affected by streams of influence which flowed from the Nazarene carpenter. Sixty thousand volumes have been written in an attempt to explain him. "The name of Jesus," wrote Emerson, "is not so much written as ploughed into the history of the world." Consequently, the manifestation of indifference or condescension toward one of the formative personalities of the ages is intellectually indefensible.¹

Ethical aspiration, spiritual yearning, and social need have driven countless individuals to examine afresh the dynamics of a life which reached such heights of moral and religious creativity. A vivid realization of the way he met critical situations may increase the degree of our own vision and courage. The back-to-Jesus movement is not an attempt to discover ready-made solutions for contemporary problems, but rather an endeavor to explore the sources of illumination and power, and to come within range of the explosive stimuli hurled forth by the most radiant of personalities.

The present volume is not a discussion of modern economic, international, and other social problems, but is devoted to a *portrayal of Jesus in his own environment*, to a consideration of his responses to various dilemmas with which he was confronted, and to an examination of the reasons underlying his crucial choices.

Many modern writers consider a study of Jesus to be a waste of time, if not actually confusing to thought con-

¹ A modern Jewish writer says: "There are many reasons why a Jew should be interested in Jesus. First of all, Jesus has become the most popular, the most studied, the most influential figure in the religious history of mankind. This alone should be enough to compel the Jew's attention. Whether we like it or no, Jesus has fascinated mankind."—H. G. Enelow, *A Jewish View of Jesus*, pp. 4, 5. Block Publishing Co.

cerning present day problems. In discussing Professor Harry F. Ward's book, *Our Economic Morality and the Ethic of Jesus*, Dr. Harry Elmer Barnes says:¹ "It is difficult to conceive of a more preposterous proposition than for one of the ablest living critics of the modern economic order to appeal to the sanction of a man who had never seen a machine, a factory, or a real city and who was as ignorant of the Ricardian law of rent as he was of Veblen's doctrine of absentee ownership or Ripley's discussions of stock distribution and corporate control. It is as absurd as it would be for Michaelson to justify his experiments in regard to the speed of light by an appeal to some of Jesus' observations relative to his being the 'light of the world.'"

In the pages that follow an effort is made to show that, in spite of the fact that Jesus lived centuries ago under conditions strikingly different from those of our own day, he nevertheless possesses immense significance for this generation.

Among "rationalists" and "free-thinkers" there has been a tendency to raise a question as to whether Jesus ever lived at all, and a determined effort has been put forth to make a convincing case that he is a mythical creation of the early Christians. This point of view has been exhaustively analyzed by Professor S. J. Case, of the University of Chicago Divinity School, in a volume entitled *The Historicity of Jesus*. Professor Case, a scholar of the first rank and one thoroughly committed to the scientific methods of historical criticism, summarizes his conclusions as follows:

When all the evidence brought against Jesus' historicity is surveyed it is found to contain no elements of strength. All theories that would explain the rise of the New Testament literature by making it a purely fictitious product fail, and the arguments for a pre-Christian Jesus are found to lack any substantial basis. . . . Moreover when the credentials of the negative hypothesis, and its application to Christian origins, are minutely examined, their unsubstantial and fallacious character becomes evident. . . . As Weiss remarks, it

¹ *The Twilight of Christianity*, p. 381. By permission of Richard R. Smith, Inc., publishers.

is the most difficult task in the world to prove to nonsense that it is nonsense.¹

An American writer recently said dogmatically: "There is, therefore, in extant Jewish literature of the first century A. D. not a single authentic line making reference to Jesus." Dr. Joseph Klausner, a distinguished Jewish scholar, holds a different opinion. In a long section on "The Hebrew Sources," he writes: ". . . it is unreasonable to question either the existence of Jesus . . . or his general character as it is depicted in the Gospels."²

The latter phrase deals with a question which is far more significant than the mere historicity of Jesus, namely, the reliability of the New Testament evidence concerning Jesus. The negative argument has been stated in these extravagant words: ". . . there is not in existence a single absolutely authentic passage which we may be sure literally reproduces any saying of Jesus or describes with unerring accuracy any deed or event of his life . . . we have not a single passage which we can be sure accurately reproduces Christ's views on any subject." On the contrary, Professor Eduard Meyer, himself a thorough-going "rationalist" and once described by Bishop Gore as "the greatest living authority on the history of antiquity as a whole," concludes his study of Mark's Gospel with the positive assertion:

The conclusion we have won is of the highest importance. It is evident that for our history of Jesus we have by no means to reckon merely with representations of the second, sub-apostolic, generation, but are taken back far behind that into the midst of the first generation who personally had known him intimately (*genau*) and still preserved a lively recollection of him; and that these old recollections lie under our eyes in manifold forms. There is no ground at all for refusing to accept these oldest traditions as historically trustworthy in all essentials, and in their chronological ordering of the history.³

¹ S. J. Case, *The Historicity of Jesus*, pp. 130-132. By permission of the University of Chicago Press, publishers.

² Joseph Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth*, p. 20. By permission of The Macmillan Company, publishers.

³ Quoted by Charles Gore, *Jesus of Nazareth*, p. 191. By permission of Henry Holt & Co., Inc., publishers.

It is not necessary to maintain that the exact phrases used by Jesus have been preserved in the Gospel records. The vital question has to do with "his general character as it is depicted in these Gospels." A vast mass of well qualified opinion could be assembled to support the thesis that in Matthew, Mark, and Luke we have a portrait of Jesus which possesses essential unity and authenticity.¹ There are, of course, numerous divergencies in details, and the respective writers often vary in their emphases. But in the Synoptics a vivid picture of Jesus' personality is presented, and the essential elements in his philosophy of life are outlined in an illuminating manner. Evidence to support this contention is offered in the succeeding chapters, and in my conclusion I shall return to the question of the reliability and significance of the records.

The Gospel of John is regarded by many Christians as the most precious portion of the New Testament, but among scholars it is recognized as being in a different category from the three other Gospels. It was written at a much later date

¹ Professor E. F. Scott, of Union Theological Seminary and one of the most eminent of contemporary New Testament scholars, writes: "Whatever may be doubtful about the life of Jesus we can now feel assured that in the main we are not dealing with vague legend but with history, preserved in documents that were drawn up so soon after the events as to be reasonably trustworthy. Moreover it is possible, by careful analysis and by comparison of the Gospels with each other, to distinguish between the primary and secondary strata of the tradition. Our life of Jesus has become shorter and more fragmentary than it once was; but we need be troubled no more with the uneasy doubt that it may all be a pious fiction. There is a bed-rock in the narrative, and within certain limits we can determine it, which must be ascribed to the memory of first-hand witnesses."—E. F. Scott, *The New Testament Today*, pp. 34, 35. By permission of The Macmillan Company, publishers.

Another distinguished scholar, Professor S. J. Case, says: "It is still possible, from the gospel records and our acquaintance with contemporary Judaism, to reconstruct with a fair degree of certainty a picture of Jesus the preacher in his own distinctive environment delivering his forceful utterances to those with whom he came in contact. Happily, his words so deeply imbedded themselves in the minds of his followers that his message to his own generation has been preserved with remarkable fidelity, considering the powerful motives tending to effect the transformation of tradition within the early church."—S. J. Case, *Jesus: A New Biography*, p. 414. By permission of The University of Chicago Press, publishers.

and was prepared as an interpretation of Jesus for persons in a Greek environment. The Fourth Gospel is not considered *history* in the same sense that is true of the Synoptics, and consequently, I am not making use of it in this discussion. In cases where the interpretations contained in John's Gospel seem especially illuminating, such passages are emphasized in footnotes.

WAYS OF USING THIS VOLUME

The following pages are designed as an aid for those who set aside a daily period for Bible study. *It is suggested that the first period of each week be devoted to a reading of the text of a given chapter, and that on successive days the designated Biblical passages be read, and followed by meditation and prayer.* Supplementary daily readings concerning modern economic, social and political problems are available in *Living Creatively*,¹ by the present writer. In this book ten steps toward creative living are outlined and interpreted. Two hundred pages are devoted to an anthology of one hundred daily readings, discussing the following steps: relieve human misery, transform unjust social systems, gain vision and serenity through silence, seek beauty, cultivate friendship and fellowship, recover strength through penitence, explore great biographies, follow the noblest personality, cooperate creatively with God, run risks and accept penalties.

A Fellowship in Discipline is the title of 56 loose-leaf devotional readings edited by David R. Porter, as part of a series being projected under the general title *Toward a New Way of Life*. Many students are being jarred out of ruts by these invigorating selections. In an attractive vest-pocket notebook, they are available from The National Council of Student Associations, 347 Madison Avenue, for 25 cents.

Many persons find one of the new versions of the New

¹ *Living Creatively*, by Kirby Page, 305 pages, published by Farrar and Rinehart, \$2.00. For special rates write to Eddy and Page, 347 Madison Avenue, New York City.

Testament to be clearer and more incisive than the Authorized Version. In the following pages we have drawn freely from six different versions, and desire to express our grateful appreciation to the following publishers for permission to make use of specified passages:

Ray Long and Richard R. Smith, Inc., publishers of *The New Testament, A New Translation*, by James Moffatt, \$.60-\$4.00.

The University of Chicago Press, publishers of *The New Testament, An American Translation*, by Edgar J. Goodspeed, \$1.00.

Charles Scribner's Sons, publishers of *The Shorter Bible: The New Testament*, translated and arranged by Charles Foster Kent, \$2.00.

James Clarke and Company, London, publishers of *The New Testament in Modern Speech*, by Richard Francis Weymouth.

Fleming H. Revell Company, publishers of *The Twentieth Century New Testament*, by twenty scholars.

Thomas Nelson & Sons, publishers of *The American Revised Edition of the New Testament*.

If the reader has not previously read *The Modern Use of the Bible*,¹ by Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick, or a similar volume, he will find such a study to be a source of great illumination.

For the person who desires to make a serious study, *Records of the Life of Jesus*, by Dr. Henry Burton Sharman, published by the Association Press, \$2.50, is simply indispensable. Dr. Sharman has here assembled in parallel columns the testimony of Matthew, Mark and Luke, thus enabling the reader easily to make a comprehensive study of a given incident or teaching. His little book, *Jesus in the Records*, is extremely valuable for discussion groups, published by Association Press. Of equal value is *The Way of Jesus*, by Henry T. Hodgkin, and published by Ray Long and Richard R. Smith, Inc. Perhaps no study text has

¹ Published in a dollar edition by The Macmillan Company.

helped more students than *Jesus and His Cause*, by Bruce Curry, published by the Association Press.

Another invigorating volume is *Everyman's Life of Jesus*, by Professor James Moffatt, published by Ray Long and Richard R. Smith, Inc., \$1.50. The combined message of the Gospels has been woven into a consecutive story. The various sections are introduced in an illuminating manner. Dr. Moffatt's own translation is used throughout. This little book is especially recommended for persons who are just beginning a serious study of Jesus. For me the most inspiring of all the lives of Jesus is a little volume published anonymously, by Ray Long and Richard R. Smith, Inc., under the title *By An Unknown Disciple*, \$1.25.

I am deeply indebted to the following persons, who have read this manuscript and passed along helpful suggestions: Bruce Curry, David R. Porter, Sherwood Eddy, E. B. Schultz, and S. M. Keeny.

CHAPTER I

THE WORLD IN WHICH HE LIVES

All aspects of Jewish life during the days of Jesus were vitally affected by the presence of the Roman conquerors and rulers. In 63 B. C. the Roman general Pompey brought to an end the century of Jewish freedom inaugurated by the Maccabees. Previously the Jews had been ruled at various periods by Greeks, Syrians, Egyptians, Persians, Babylonians, and Assyrians.

Pompey ushered in Roman rule with a terrible massacre in which 12,000 Jews perished and priests were slain at the altar. Shortly thereafter Aulus Gabinius, the pro-consul, crushed a revolt in Judea, and in 54 B. C. his successor, Crassus, plundered the Temple. Three years later Taricheae was captured and 30,000 Jews were sold as slaves.¹ With the aid of the Parthians, Antigonus was temporarily installed in power, but when Herod the Great was supported by Antony with Roman troops, Jerusalem was besieged and taken by storm. Antigonus was beheaded and subsequently 45 members of the Sanhedrin were murdered and their property confiscated.² After Herod's death in 4 B. C., his son Archelaus was assigned Judea, and following a series of bloody riots, 3,000 Jews were slaughtered, even the courtyard of the Temple being filled with the fallen. After Archelaus had been removed by Augustus, Judea was ruled directly by Roman procurators, the most famous of whom was Pontius Pilate. Roman domination continued until the year 70 A. D., when Jerusalem was destroyed "amid circumstances of unparalleled horror."

Roman administration was relatively efficient and tolerant, with the result that many material blessings followed in its train. Considerable local autonomy was granted, but all opposition was crushed with ruthlessness. The soldiers of imperialism have ever regarded with contempt the subject

¹ *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 14th edition, vol. 13, p. 53.

² *Ibid.*, vol. 11, p. 511.

peoples over whom they exercised power. The arrogance of the Romans was a source of galling bitterness to the Jews. To the vanquished it appeared outrageous that military pagans should exercise dominion over Jehovah's chosen people. To pay tribute to Caesar was to drink the dregs of degradation, and when profane Roman hands were laid upon the sacred High Priest and even religion was made subservient to imperialism, the faithful seethed with pious fury. We are informed by Josephus that from the accession of Herod to the destruction of the Temple, there were no fewer than 28 High Priests.¹

The glories of empire have always proved to be costly, and enslaved peoples have had to pay heavily for their chains. From the Jews the conquerors exacted a city tax, house tax, road tax, water tax, meat tax, and salt tax. The legal rates were high; the amounts extorted by the tax-gatherers were outrageous. Tyranny plus corruption placed a crushing burden upon the Jews.

Moreover, they were victimized by a system of double-taxation. Numerous exactions were made by their own ecclesiastical authorities: the tithe, sin offering, thank offering, and first-born of animals. They were also confronted with a system of double-graft. To the corruption of Roman agents were added dishonest exchange in the Temple and profiteering from the sale of sacrificial animals. Swarms of priests and other Temple officials fattened on the blood of the poor.

The two systems of taxation were independent and each operated on the theory of imposing "all the traffic would bear." The result was that during the days of Jesus *taxation consumed at least 30 per cent of the Jewish national income*, and the proportion may have reached 40 per cent.²

Peoples with low incomes suffer most heavily from exorbitant taxation. The standard of living for the masses in Palestine was tragically low. But it seems probable that the

¹ *Antiquities*, xx, 10.1.

² Frederick C. Grant, *The Economic Background of the Gospels*, p. 105. Oxford University Press.

country as a whole was more prosperous under Greek and Roman rule than had been true in earlier periods. The growth of commerce and the rise of a city-civilization had brought increased prosperity for a portion of the population. However, the artisans and peasants were caught between the rising cost of living and the necessity of competing with the vast supply of slave labor throughout the Empire. The land was densely populated in relation to its resources and the productivity of the soil.¹

The masses were therefore living under a terrific strain. Their hovels were cramped and crude. Few comforts were available and hunger was never far away. Exploited alike by the Romans and their own landlords, money-lenders, and ecclesiastics, multitudes were unable to rise above a bare subsistence level.

The misery of the poor was intensified by their emotional resistance to Roman rule. With numberless daily reminders of their bondage, it was easy for them to attribute their suffering to the foreign yoke. And so their cup of bitterness was continuously overflowing. In many cases the strain was so awful that mental derangement must have exacted a tragic toll. It was in such an environment that Jesus began, continued, and ended his work.

The key to an understanding of Jesus is found in these words: "The child grew and became strong and wise, and the blessing of God was upon him. . . . And Jesus grew in wisdom as he grew in years, and 'gained the blessing of God and men.' " ²

Although the record is silent concerning his boyhood and young manhood, except for a reference to his visit to the Temple at the age of twelve, we are not completely in the dark with regard to his early experiences.³ He lives within a leisurely hour's walk of Sepphoris, the second most im-

¹ Chester Charlton McCown, *The Genesis of the Social Gospel*, pp. 297 ff. F. S. Crofts and Company, New York.

² Luke 2:40, 52, Twentieth Century Translation.

³ For an imaginary but highly stimulating account of Jesus' boyhood, see John Oxenham, *The Hidden Years*.

portant city of the land.¹ Near by is a great highway from Egypt to Greece and Rome, over which travel Imperial troops and the commodities and cultures of many nations. From the hilltop at Nazareth he can easily see the white sails on the Mediterranean. It is wholly probable that at intervals he joins the throngs of worshippers from far and near who journey to Jerusalem for the great festivals. A child with such precocious learning as is exhibited by Jesus in his discussions with the wise men in the Temple—perhaps even with the great Hillel himself—must seek eagerly for knowledge of other peoples and cultures. His subsequent references to men of other races become more illuminating when we recall that in all probability they come out of frequent contacts and numberless conversations with aliens.

A sensitive Jew could not have been unaware of or indifferent to the political bondage and economic misery of his countrymen. "The central problem of his people was so enveloping," writes Professor Simkhovitch, "that we can take for granted that Jesus' religious and intellectual life revolved around it, and that his own development consisted in the gradual solution of this very problem. To repeat, at the given time there was but one problem for the Jews—a single, all-absorbing national problem, that became under the circumstances *the* religious problem as well. It was the problem of existence, the problem of escape from certain annihilation."²

As a village carpenter with responsibilities for maintaining a large household, Jesus is familiar with economic distress. The evidence seems conclusive that Joseph died during the boyhood of Jesus and that thereafter heavy domestic duties rest upon the eldest son. Four younger brothers and at least two sisters, in addition to his widowed mother, bring the family to a minimum of eight, with possibly one or more additional sisters.³ The numerous later references of Jesus

¹ S. J. Case, *Jesus: A New Biography*, p. 127.

² *Toward The Understanding of Jesus*, p. 28. By permission of The Macmillan Company, publishers.

³ See Matt. 13:55, 56.

to the poor assume increased vividness when we remember that they emerged from grinding experience.

We may be certain therefore that prior to the day when Jesus goes out to hear the flaming message of John the Baptist, he has brooded long and passionately over the injustices and sufferings of his people. To say that Jesus is not concerned with political and economic problems, is to accuse him of ethical blindness and callousness, whereas his superfine ethical sensitiveness is indelibly impressed upon the record. If Jesus does not care about the degradation and misery of his countrymen, then he is not worthy of our devotion. Such an assumption, moreover, makes meaningless the repeated references in the record to his compassionate and sacrificial service. "As a Jew," writes Shailer Mathews, "he shared in conditions set by the new epoch. For, without leading revolt, he was to live and teach in the atmosphere of revolution, use the language of revolution, make the revolutionary spirit the instrument of his message, and organize a movement composed of men who awaited a divinely given new age. . . . The approach to a true understanding of Jesus is through social psychology, and particularly through the messianic hope of his people. And the messianic hope is a phase of the psychology of revolution. To understand it one should be a student of revolutions."¹

¹ *Jesus on Social Institutions*, pp. 12, 13. By permission of The Macmillan Company, publishers.

DAILY READINGS AND MEDITATIONS

SECOND DAY: ANCIENT RESPONSES TO TYRANNY.

Ps. 137:7-9; Isa. 13:6-9, 16-22; Ps. 58:10, 11.

For Study and Meditation: Were similar ideas prevalent in Palestine during the days of Jesus? Were Jewish patriots more or less vindictive than patriots of other lands? Do you know of parallel utterances in modern times?

THIRD DAY: A DIFFERENT ANCIENT RESPONSE.

Isa. 19:18-25; 64:8-12.

For Study and Meditation: How do you account for the contrast in attitudes revealed in the verses above? Hatred or friendliness—which more often characterized the Jewish attitude toward foreigners? Which was dominant during the days of Jesus?

FOURTH DAY: UNDER POLITICAL BONDAGE.

Mark 2:13-16; Luke 19:1-8.

For Study and Meditation: Why should Jesus make such a profound impression upon despised agents of foreign militarism? Why were the respectable Jewish leaders scandalized by Jesus' practice of eating with tax-collectors?

FIFTH DAY: CONFRONTING ECONOMIC DISTRESS.

Luke 16:19-31; Mark 12:41-44.

For Study and Meditation: Why are the poor always with us? What other references to economic and financial affairs in the teaching of Jesus do you recall?

SIXTH DAY: DEALING WITH MENTAL DISORDERS.

Mark 1:21-28; 5:1-9.

For Study and Meditation: Has it ever occurred to you that the malady described as being "possessed by an evil

spirit" may have been a form of insanity produced by misery, hatred, and strain? What significance do you attach to the frequency with which such cases are referred to in the brief Gospel records?

SEVENTH DAY: EARLY IMPRESSIONS OF JESUS.

Mark 1:21, 22, 45; 2:12; 9:2-7; 11:7-10.

For Study and Meditation: How do you account for the superlatively magnetic personality of Jesus? In what way do you explain his winsome appeal to various types of contemporaries?

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. In what countries today are political and economic conditions somewhat similar to those prevailing in Palestine during the days of Jesus?

2. List several parallel aspects of the situation in India today and in Palestine during the first century. List also several outstanding contrasts. In what ways, if any, do these similarities and contrasts shed light upon Jesus' major decisions?

3. In what respects, if any, are the Filipinos now confronting a situation similar to the one which faced Jesus?

4. What political and economic problems, if any, now confronting the people of Haiti are somewhat analogous to those of Palestine under Roman rule?

5. Was Imperial Rome more considerate or more tyrannical in its treatment of subject peoples than is the case with modern imperialist governments? Give reasons for your answer.

6. In what ways is Mahatma Gandhi's religious message affected by political and economic conditions in India?

7. What evidence, if any, is available to show that Jesus was deeply concerned about the bondage and poverty of his people?

8. Just what does Dean Shailer Mathews mean when he says that to understand Jesus one must be a student of revolutions?

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2. S. J. Case, *Jesus: A New Biography*, pp. 116-159.
3. Joseph Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth*, pp. 129-228.
4. Frederick C. Grant, *The Economic Background of the Gospels*.
5. C. C. McCown, *The Genesis of the Social Gospel*, pp. 292-335.
6. Samuel Dickey, *The Constructive Revolution of Jesus*.
7. S. Angus, *The Environment of Early Christianity*.
8. B. W. Robinson, *The Sayings of Jesus*, pp. 48-90.
9. Basil Matthews, *A Life of Jesus*, pp. 23-102.
10. Shailer Mathews, *Jesus on Social Institutions*, pp. 11-28.
11. Emil Schürer, *A History of the Jewish People in the Time of Christ*, vol. 1, pp. 400-467; vol. 2, pp. 1-149.

(The books listed above may be purchased from Association Press.)

CHAPTER II

SOLUTIONS PROPOSED BY HIS CONTEMPORARIES

What proposed solutions were being offered for the critical problems of Palestine in the days of Jesus? What were the various alternatives available to him as he began his public career? Let us now consider the five remedies which were being offered by Essenes, Sadducees, Pharisees and Scribes, Apocalypstists, and Zealots.

1. Escape was the method of the Essenes. While they are not referred to in the Bible or in Rabbinical literature, information concerning them is furnished by Philo, the famous Alexandrian Jew; by Josephus, the Jewish historian; and by Pliny, the Roman. According to Philo, the Essenes numbered over 4,000 and resided chiefly in monastic colonies around the Dead Sea, but sometimes in cities. They lived a communistic life, sharing all possessions in common, even their clothing, and eating at a common table. They engaged in farming and handicrafts, but avoided commerce and "all inducements to covetous gain." Extreme simplicity and frugality characterized their mode of life.

Most of their colonies insisted upon absolute continence, and were replenished by adoption from the outside, followed with rigid discipline. In a significant passage, Pliny says that "their membership is steadily recruited from the large number of people who resort to their mode of existence because they are *wearied of life's struggle with the waves of adversity.*"¹

Three rules and standards guided their relationships: the love of God, the love of virtue, and the love of man. They were characterized by their freedom from the love of money and desire for fame. Josephus emphasizes their moral earnestness and brotherliness, while Philo concludes a glowing eulogy with these words: "So enviable, then, is the life of these Essenes that not only private persons, but also great

¹ Quoted in *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, vol. 5, p. 399. Chas. Scribner's Sons, publishers.

kings, are filled with admiration and amazement at the men, and make their venerable character still more venerable by marks of approbation and honour.”¹ Indifferent to national needs and aspirations, the Essenes sought salvation by fleeing from the miseries and contaminations of ordinary society.²

2. Violent revolt was the method advocated by the Zealots.³ Designated by Josephus as “robbers,” these adherents of assassination and armed rebellion, were relentless in their hostility to alien culture and domination. They sought political freedom and to preserve the purity of the Jewish faith. They especially resented the census, which was preparatory to more inclusive and oppressive taxation. To them Roman taxation meant “nothing else than downright slavery.” Josephus writes: “. . . they have an inviolable attachment to liberty, and say that God is to be their only Lord and Master. They also do not mind dying any death, nor indeed do they heed the deaths of their relations and friends. . . .” The Zealots were Apocalyptists who believed that the coming of the Deliverer could be hastened by proof of their readiness to receive him. And so they whetted their daggers and sharpened their swords.

Under the leadership of Judas the Galilean, they offered armed resistance. Concerning the extent of this opposition, Josephus wrote that “the nation was infected with the doctrine to an incredible degree.” Judas succeeded in capturing the military equipment stored at Sepphoris, next to Jerusalem the largest city in Palestine, and made it a center of the rebellion. But the Romans were too powerful, with the result that Sepphoris was recaptured, burned to the ground, and its inhabitants sold into slavery. Outside Jerusalem 2,000 Jewish patriots were crucified on trees.⁴

The flames of this rebellion were never extinguished until

¹ *Ibid.*, vol. 5, p. 397.

² See an illuminating article by James Moffatt, *Ibid.*, vol. 5, pp. 396-401.

³ See V. G. Simkhovitch, *Toward the Understanding of Jesus*; and Hastings, *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, vol. 12, pp. 849 ff.

⁴ See Klausner, *op. cit.*, p. 157.

Masada was annihilated, three years after Jerusalem had been sacked, burned, and obliterated in the year 70 A. D. "The rebellion of the Jews against Rome," writes Professor Simkhovitch, "rather begins with the power of Rome over the Jews; and in the same degree as the Roman power over the Jews increased, did the political reaction against that power, the revolution against Rome, increase and spread. . . . During all that time the life of the little nation was a terrific drama; its patriotic emotions were aroused to the highest pitch and then still more inflamed by the identification of national politics with a national religion."¹ In a memorable passage Dr. Klausner describes the century which began six decades before Jesus' birth and ended after his death:

Scarcely a year went by during this century without wars or other disturbances: wars, rebellions, outbreaks and riots, and all of them with their concomitant of incessant bloodshed; and this state of things prevailed in the Land of Israel throughout the whole epoch which preceded Jesus and prevailed also during his lifetime, a period which can be styled "the Edomite epoch"—from the rise of Antipater, the father of Herod, till the rise of Agrippa I, the grandson of Herod. Were we to count up one by one those who fell in the wars and rebellions and those murdered by Herod and the Procurators during this dreadful century, we should reach a total of not less than two hundred thousand men—an appalling number for such a comparatively small country; and it is even more terrible when we recall that those who died in war were the pick of the nation physically, and those murdered by Herod were the pick of the nation intellectually and culturally.²

In this seething caldron of misery, hatred, and bloodshed, Jesus lived all his days. He rejected the proposed solutions being offered by his contemporaries for reasons which we shall consider as we summarize his way of life.

3. Compromise was the technique of the Sadducees. This group was composed of the priestly aristocracy, together

¹ *Op. cit.*, pp. 7, 10, 11.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 167.

with recruits from the rich merchant-class and public officials. The Sadducees were pro-Roman in their sympathies. The high-priest was chosen from their number and they dominated the Temple worship, including the sale of sacrificial animals and the system of exchange. The enormous Temple income derived therefrom and that yielded by the various ecclesiastical taxes assured the Sadducees great wealth. Their privileges were further increased by intimate contacts with Roman officials and by lucrative contracts with traders from various corners of the Empire.

The Sadducees differed in theology from the Pharisees at three important points: they denied that the oral traditions were equally authoritative with the Law; they denied the bodily resurrection of the dead; and they rejected the ideal of a messianic kingdom on earth.

Sitting in seats of power and sleeping in beds of luxury, the Sadducees were naturally conservative. Though they, in common with all other true Jews, objected to Roman rule, they did not regard it as intolerable. Enjoying privilege, power and prestige, they felt no dynamic urge to transform the *status quo*. Indeed, they were strongly opposed to agitators and revolutionists, their attitude being somewhat similar to that of the wealthy pro-British groups of merchants and public officials in India today.

Though the evidence is clear that among the Sadducees there were pious and compassionate individuals, the group as a whole was characterized by complacency, arrogance, and greed. Certainly, the Sadducees offered no program of redemption for the destitute and oppressed.

4. Dramatic intervention by Jehovah was the ardent expectation of the Apocalyptists. In an illuminating chapter, Professor Case has set forth the evidence that throughout Hebrew history, periods of tragedy brought forth numerous prophecies of the imminent coming of a Divine Deliverer.¹ Groaning under Roman rule, it was natural that the Apocalyptists should revive and extend the prophetic message of

¹ See S. J. Case, *The Millennial Hope*, pp. 48-106; also C. C. McCown, *The Promise of His Coming*.

speedy redemption. They believed that the "last days" had come and that God would intervene with dramatic power. The wickedness of the exploiters was so great and the misery of their victims was so colossal that further endurance was intolerable. Hence the ardent expectation that Jehovah would put to flight the unrighteous and rescue the poor.

The best known Jewish Apocalypses are the Book of Daniel, the Book of Enoch, and the Second Book of Esdras. They date from the Maccabean period and are concerned primarily with the struggle between Judaism and Hellenism. The outcome of this conflict is envisaged as a dramatic triumph by miraculous intervention of Jehovah, who will establish justice in the earth.

For example, in the Book of Enoch, we read: "And there will be a judgement on all things and with the righteous He will make peace, and on the elect will be protection. . . . For He comes with His ten thousands and His holy ones to do judgment upon all, and will destroy all the ungodly and will convict all flesh for all the works of ungodliness which they have ungodly done . . ." (cf. Jude 4:14-15).

The writer of the Assumption of Moses exclaims:

And the earth shall tremble; to its confines shall it be shaken: and the high mountains shall be made low and the hills shall be shaken and fall. And the horns of the sun shall be broken and he shall be turned into darkness; and the moon shall not give her light and the circle of the stars shall be disturbed. And the sea shall retire in the abyss, and the fountains of water shall fail and the rivers shall dry up. For the Most High will arise, the Eternal God alone, and he will appear to punish the Gentiles, and he will destroy all their idols. Then thou, O Israel, shalt be happy and thou shalt mount upon the neck and wings of the eagle, and they shall be ended and God will exalt thee . . . And thou shalt look from on high and see thy enemies in Gehenna and thou shalt recognize them and rejoice. And thou shalt give thanks and confess thy Creator.¹

¹ R. H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, pp. 420, 421. Oxford University Press.

John the Baptist seems to have been an ardent Apocalypticist. He proclaimed the imminent day of judgment, when the wrath of God would destroy sinners and establish the divine society. Penitence and purity of life would hasten the day of deliverance, but God alone was able to succor His people.

5. Legalism and charity constituted the method of the Pharisees. "Judaism," writes a French scholar, "reduced all moral life to the observance of a historically revealed law." Believing that Jehovah's plan of salvation had been delivered to their forefathers in the Law, the Pharisees demanded strict observance of the divine commandments. "Disobedience to the commands of God," writes Dr. Felix Perles, "was equal to heresy. . . . Judaism was from the beginning more of a religion of doing than of believing, and, therefore, it has laid the main emphasis on the legal rather than the mystical element."¹ Changed conditions during successive centuries had necessitated interpretations and adjustments. These oral traditions were looked upon by the Pharisees as equally binding with the Law itself.²

The picture of the Pharisees presented in the New Testament is inadequate and unfair. Their devotion to the Law was sincere and passionate. They were tireless in their efforts to secure strict fidelity to the ceremonial laws, not only as a symbol of obedience and reverence toward God, but also as a means of preserving Jewish traditions and established institutions. Since the days when Alexander the Great conquered Palestine, Hellenistic influences had constantly threatened the continuance of Jewish ideals and customs. The tendency among Sadducees was to accept and absorb Greek thought and mode of life; the Pharisees were rigid purists and fought passionately against the inroads of paganism. "No corrected view of Jesus' teaching," writes Rabbi Trattner, "will be forthcoming unless we realize at the very outset that Pharisaism enshrined the noblest ideals of the

¹ *Hastings, op. cit.*, vol. 7, p. 855.

² The legal portions of the Pentateuch are listed by Felix Perles as: Ex. 12 ff., 20-23, 25-31, 34 ff.; Lv. 1-8, 11-25, 27; Nu. 5-10, 18 ff., 27:7-11, 28-30, 35 ff.; Dt. 4-27.

Jewish people. There were other sects (or parties) in Palestine at that time—the Sadducees, the Essenes, and others. But they were not popular. The Pharisees alone had the sympathies of the vast mass of the Jewish people. They were the truly democratic party, loyal to the Law, and genuinely patriotic.”¹

To the Pharisees must be accorded chief credit for maintaining monotheism, building up religious individualism, strengthening belief in immortality, and propagating the faith through missionary zeal. They were as a rule drawn from the ranks of the people and were far more democratic than were the Sadducees. They constantly asserted the rights of the masses as against the encroachments of the priestly aristocracy. Many of their interpretations of the Law were prompted by compassion and mercy, and were an endeavor to adjust the code to human need. They represented the element of evolution and progress in relation to the Law. They sought to bring religion more vitally into the home, and substantially raised the status of women.

The messianic figure of the Pharisees’ hope was not the transcendental and heavenly figure of some apocalyptists, but was a human son of David who would reign on earth. Beyond doubt the Pharisees were the most popular and powerful religious group in Palestine during the lifetime of Jesus, and probably their piety and zeal were not excelled by any other contemporary sect in the whole world. Recently a Jewish scholar wrote: “The influence of the Pharisees was immense. They were men of extreme piety and devotion, and their aim was to sanctify every phase of daily life. The Jew was to think of God in every act, at every moment.”²

The devotion of the Pharisees toward the Law, however, led them into the pitfalls of formalism and ceremonialism. Sometimes they seemed to regard strict observance as an end rather than a means. Their efforts to preserve the

¹ *As a Jew Sees Jesus*, p. 99. Charles Scribner’s Sons, publishers.

² *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, vol. 7, p. 588. Charles Scribner’s Sons, publishers.

sanctity of the divine Commandments, and at the same time to adjust them to difficult situations, resulted in countless legal fictions. The true spirit of religion was constantly in danger of becoming submerged in legal *minutiae*.

The scribes, who are frequently referred to in the New Testament, were members of a lay order, most of them being Pharisees. By adding rule to rule they sought to prevent the secularization and disintegration of Judaism. But their extreme emphasis upon externalism tended to obscure the spiritual aspects of their faith. Professor Moffatt points out that in endeavoring "to make a fence" for the Law, they resorted to ritual niceties, externalism, and rigidity. Dr. Headlam has assembled the following passages from the tract of the *Mishna* called *Berakhoth*:

"These are the controversies relating to meals between the schools of Shammai and Hillel. The school of Shammai says, 'One must say the blessing of the day, and then bless the wine'; but the school of Hillel says, 'One must say the blessing on the wine, and then bless the day.'

"The school of Shammai say, 'Men must pour water on the hands and then mix the goblet'; but the school of Hillel say, 'The goblet must be mixed, and then water poured on the hands.'

"The school of Shammai say, 'One is to wipe his hands on the napkin and lay it on the table'; but the school of Hillel say, 'on the cushion.'

"The school of Shammai bless 'the light, the food, the spices, and the distinction of the day'; but the school of Hillel bless 'the light, the spices, the food and the distinction of the day.' The school of Shammai say, 'Who created the light of fire'; but the school of Hillel say, 'Creator of the light of fire.'

"If one have eaten and forgotten and not blessed? The school of Shammai say, 'He must return to his place and bless.' But the school of Hillel say, 'He may bless in the place where he recollects.' How long is one obliged to bless? 'Until the food in his stomach be digested.'"¹

¹ Arthur C. Headlam, *The Life and Teaching of Jesus the Christ*, pp. 86, 87. Oxford University Press.

The Sabbath for example was a day of rest and joy and thanksgiving; but numberless rules and regulations were designed to preserve its sanctity and yet permit the necessary activities of daily life to be carried on. One has only to read the various subdivisions under the thirty-nine varieties of labor that are forbidden on the Sabbath, however, to be impressed with the artificiality of many distinctions outlined therein. From the treatise on the Sabbath in *The Mishna*, Dr. Robinson has taken the following:

The School of Shammai hold that you may take anything off the stove, but you must not put back anything which you have taken off; the School of Hillel hold that food may also be put back on the stove . . .

A man may not pour cold water into a kettle of hot water which has been removed from the fire, in order to make the cold water warm. But he may pour cold water into a kettle of hot water in order to cool the latter . . .

Whoever hunts a bird into a cage, or a deer into a house, is guilty. The rule is that when the capture is not complete, the man is not guilty; but when the capture is complete, he is guilty . . .

A man who is overtaken by sunset while on the road must give his pack to a gentile to carry. If there is no gentile with him, he must put it on his donkey. As soon as he arrives at the first house or the first village, he shall take off such things as may be removed on the Sabbath; and as to the things which may not be removed, he loosens the ropes, that they may drop off of themselves.¹

The following citations are taken from Dr. Oesterley's translation of the *Tractate Shabbath*: one may not search his garments for vermin; it is not permissible to kindle Sabbath lights with cedar twigs or with pitch, but one authority is quoted as permitting kindling with boiled fat; dishes may not be kept warm in salt or sand or straw, but it is permissible to keep such dishes warm in sawdust or the feathers of doves; a camel may go out with a bit, but not with a pad; he who carries out a loaf to a public place is guilty, but if

¹ *The Sayings of Jesus*, pp. 79-81. By permission of Harper & Brothers, publishers.

two carry it together, they are not guilty; a sin offering is required if a man removes his finger-nails, or a woman paints her eyebrows; one may not take vinegar for toothache, but he may dip his food in vinegar and thereby reduce the pain; 3,000 feet is the maximum distance which may be travelled on the Sabbath, but if food is previously deposited at this distance, another 3,000 feet may then be traversed.¹ From a highly critical section by Dr. Alfred Edersheim, we take the following:

Women are also forbidden to look in the glass on the Sabbath, because they might discover a white hair and attempt to pull it out, which would be a grievous sin . . . A woman may walk about her own court, but not in the street, with false hair. Similarly, a man was forbidden to wear on the Sabbath wooden shoes studded with nails, or only one shoe, as this would involve labour . . . Similarly, a person might go about with wadding in his ear, but not with false teeth nor with a gold plug in the tooth. If the wadding fell out of the ear, it could not be replaced . . . As regarded false teeth: they might fall out, and the wearer might then lift and carry them, which would be sinful on the Sabbath. But anything which formed part of the ordinary dress of a person might be worn also on the Sabbath, and children whose ears were being bored might have a plug put into the hole. It was also allowed to go about on crutches, or with a wooden leg, and children might have bells on their dresses; but it was prohibited to walk on stilts.²

The school of Shammai, as contrasted with the school of Hillel, was especially open to the charge of formalism and hypocrisy. Its adherents were extreme and fanatical, bitterly narrow and exclusive. In all the three hundred sixteen controversies carried on with the school of Hillel, the Shammaites took the lenient view in only fifty-five cases. They were venomously opposed to Roman taxation and domination, and were merciless to the pro-Roman element among

¹ W. O. E. Oesterley, *Tractate Shabbath*: Mishnah, 1927.

² *Life and Times of Jesus*, Appendix XVII. By permission of Longmans, Green & Co., publishers.

the Jews. They sought to enforce a boycott by the orthodox against Roman commodities.

One of the fatal defects of legalism was that its minute ceremonial requirements were impossible of faithful observance by the masses of the poor. The numberless precepts and rules interfered so drastically with the difficult task of securing daily bread that the masses unavoidably transgressed the Law and oral traditions, and were therefore characterized by the orthodox as "the unwashed multitude." The Pharisees rigidly refused to have voluntary contact or enter into social dealings with "the unclean rabble," who fell short with regard to ceremonial purity, correct handling of holy things, proper tithing, and devoted study of the Law.

The Pharisees were not primarily interested in politics and offered no program of redemption from political bondage and economic destitution, other than their insistence that if the Law were faithfully observed by Israel even for a single day the Kingdom of God would immediately be ushered in. With the masses of poverty-stricken Jews outside the orthodox pale, it is obvious that the program of the Pharisees was inadequate to meet the desperate needs of the people.

DAILY READINGS AND MEDITATIONS

SECOND DAY: DEVOUT EXPECTANCY.

Luke 1:5, 6; 57-80.

For Study and Meditation: How do you explain the fact that a devout Jewish father and mother had the experience herein described? Was this a unique experience in a Jewish household? Compare Luke 1:68 and Psalm 72:18 and 111:9; Luke 1:69 and I Samuel 2:10; Luke 1:72-73 and Genesis 17:7 and 22:16-18 and Leviticus 26:42 and Psalm 105:8-9 and Micah 7:20; Luke 1:76-77 and Malachi 3:1.

THIRD DAY: MARY'S SONG OF PRAISE.

Luke 1:39-56.

For Study and Meditation: Make the following comparisons: Luke 1:46-47 and I Samuel 2:1; Luke 1:48 and I Samuel 1:11; Luke 1:50 and Psalm 103:17; Luke 1:51 and Psalm 89:10; Luke 1:52 and I Samuel 2:7-8 and Job 5:11 and 12:19; Luke 1:53 and I Samuel 2:5 and Psalm 107:9; Luke 1:54-55 and Isaiah 41:8-9; Luke 1:55 and Genesis 17:7 and Micah 7:20.

FOURTH DAY: VICES OF SCRIBES AND PHARISEES.

Matt. 23:23-33.

For Study and Meditation: Throughout history why has emphasis upon ritual and ceremonial observances so frequently led to sterility and hypocrisy? Why was Jesus especially severe in his denunciation of this type of Pharisee? Were these religious leaders really more immoral than the notorious sinners of the day?

FIFTH DAY: APOCALYPTIC EXPECTATIONS.

Daniel 9:15-19; 12:5-13.

For Study and Meditation: What is the significance of the tendency during periods of calamity to expect miraculous

intervention by God? Do you think that the writer of Daniel was here referring to the coming of Jesus? Why?

SIXTH DAY: JOHN THE BAPTIST IMPRISONED.

Luke 3:1-20.

For Study and Meditation: Why was there such an extraordinary response to John's message of repentance? Does the explanation offered by Josephus to the effect that John was beheaded as a potential revolutionary sound plausible?

SEVENTH DAY: REFERENCES TO ZEALOTS AND REVOLUTIONARIES.

Luke 6:13-16; 13:1-3; 23:18, 19; Acts 5:34-37.

For Study and Meditation: Does it seem reasonable to assume that Jesus failed to consider seriously the program of the Zealots? Why did he refuse to enroll as one of their number?

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. What groups comparable to the Pharisees and Sadducees are present on a modern college campus?
2. Are the two extremes—Essenes and Zealots—represented on your campus? Describe the individuals and organizations you have in mind.
3. List several types of individuals and institutions to be found in modern industry and politics resembling respectively the Pharisees—Sadducees—Apocalyptists—Essenes—and Zealots.
4. In India today what similar groups are to be found?
5. Do you know any modern Apocalyptists? If so, describe their expectations.
6. What aspects of the Pharisees' teaching appealed most strongly to Jesus? What portions did he condemn most vigorously?
7. If you were called upon to say "a few kind words" for the Sadducees, what would you say? In what respects did they deserve denunciation?
8. Present briefly the case for the Zealots, and express an opinion as to why Jesus refused to join their party.
9. What substantial contribution, if any, to human welfare was being made by the Essenes? How do you account for Jesus' refusal to identify himself with them?
10. Discuss the adequacy of the message and program of John the Baptist in view of the political and economic problems of the day.

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(The books listed above may be purchased from Association Press.)

CHAPTER III

HIS WAY OF LIFE SUMMARIZED

When Jesus leaves his carpenter's bench at Nazareth and submits to baptism at John's hands, he thereby signifies his determination to do something about the tragic plight of his people. That he is still in doubt as to the most effective procedure to follow is indicated by his immediate withdrawal into the wilderness for prolonged meditation. When approached from this angle, the so-called temptations are seen to be alternatives which Jesus weighed and rejected.¹

The first proposal that occurs to Jesus is that he should concentrate primarily upon the endeavor to bring material relief to his stricken people. Surely the interpretation is inadequate which pictures Jesus as wrestling with the proposal that he should use his abilities to satisfy his own personal needs. After such an extremely vital spiritual experience as Jesus has undergone in the public act of commitment it seems wholly improbable that his major decision would center in the question as to whether he should seek his own comfort and pleasure. Surely he has long before risen above temptations of the palate! He has just dedicated himself in a dramatic way to the will of God, and now the problem is to discover God's method of deliverance. The proposal that he turn stones into bread is a highly figurative way of suggesting that he be chiefly concerned with the task of relieving the hunger and destitution of his countrymen.

That Jesus does regard preoccupation with physical needs as a temptation is indicated not only by his subsequent teaching, but by his own practice of withdrawing from the crowds which have been attracted by his ministry of healing and provision of bodily wants, in order that he might teach and preach. While he is moved with compassion at the sight of hunger and seeks to bring relief, he is vividly aware that a full stomach does not guarantee radiance of personality. The

¹ See Matt. 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13.

rich man whom he castigates possesses bread in unlimited measure, but fails to find life abundant.

The second and third proposals which are considered by Jesus increase in vividness as they are examined in the light of the problems of his people. The suggestion that he cast himself down from the pinnacle of the Temple and rely upon God to save him from harm can only be understood when put in an apocalyptic setting. John the Baptist is an Apocalypticist, and Jesus himself has long been familiar with the messianic expectations of his countrymen. The Jews differed in their ideas as to how the Messiah would function and as to the way his coming could be hastened, but with one accord they acknowledged that only by direct intervention of God and the majestic display of his almighty power could deliverance be assured. The Messiah would be merely a spokesman and ambassador of God, whose wisdom and strength alone were sufficient.

Whether or not Jesus at this stage regards himself as the Messiah is a question which raises sharp differences of opinion among scholars. But one aspect at least seems crystal clear: Jesus believes himself to stand in an especially intimate relationship to God and thereby to be endowed with unusual wisdom and power. From boyhood he has been aware of his intellectual and spiritual supremacy over his associates. He is saturated with memories of the way in which Jehovah had chosen and guided the great prophets of previous days. To what is God now calling him and through what channel is he to operate?

That the Jews craved a sign by which they could identify the Promised One is emphasized in the specific request later made of Jesus that he produce his credentials.¹ And so the voice whispers: "If thou art the Son of God, call upon Him for the sign and seal of His selection." The fact that Hebrew literature was filled with instances where Divine favor has been revealed in some dramatic manner made this suggestion intriguing. But Jesus finally turns away from it

¹ See Matt. 12:38; Luke 11:29.

with the conviction that the hand of God should not be forced.

The third proposal is that Jesus should gain political power by compromising with evil. The Sadducees are a living illustration of how this may be accomplished. Make friends with Rome and climb into the seats of the mighty. Jesus, with his unique abilities and magnetic personality, might gain great authority and then use his high position to bring relief to his suffering countrymen. Every person who has sought riches, on the ground that he would then be able to do vast good to his fellows, should be able to glimpse the significance of this alternative as it kept recurring to the mind of Jesus.

Another method of securing political power is considered by Jesus, the way of the Zealots and other violent revolutionaries. The Maccabees had succeeded in throwing off the foreign yoke and maintaining political freedom for a century. Though no Zealot believes that by force of arms alone the Romans can be driven into the sea, sharp daggers, keen-edged swords, and stout hearts are offered as proof to Jehovah that Israel is prepared and eager. The response which Jesus may secure from the oppressed populace if he chooses the way of armed revolt is indicated by their subsequent readiness to acclaim him as the Son of David—the successor to their valiant military leader.¹

From both variations of the third proposal—the doctrine that the end justified the means—Jesus turns away, convinced that God's will must be found elsewhere than in the adoption of evil methods.

That Jesus eventually rejects the proposed solutions of Essenes, Sadducees, Pharisees, and Zealots is apparent from the record. The method upon which he stakes everything is this: *Live today as if the Family of God has already come, and rely upon God for deliverance; live now as a good member of God's Home, run the risks, accept the penalties, and trust God for victory.*

The purpose of life is to share in the building of the

¹ See Matt. 21:9; Mark 11:10.

Divine community, wherein all members will render reverence and obedience to God, and will reside in harmonious and affectionate relations with each other. The *method* of creating the new society is, negatively, to refrain from attitudes and practices which disrupt and destroy the family; and, positively, to incarnate the virtues which constitute the foundations of the home. The Family of God can be created only as we live as good members of God's Home.

In this setting, the following passages shine more brilliantly:

On being asked by the Pharisees when the Reign of God was coming, he answered them, "The Reign of God is not coming as you hope to catch sight of it; no one will say, 'Here it is' or 'There it is,' for the Reign of God is now in your midst."¹

Then a scribe came up, who had listened to the discussion. Knowing Jesus had given them an apt answer, he put this question to him, "What is the chief of all the commands?" Jesus replied, "The chief one is: Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord, and you must love the Lord your God with your whole heart, with your whole soul, with your whole mind, and with your whole strength. The second is this: You must love your neighbour as yourself. There is no other command greater than these." The scribe said to him, "Right, teacher! You have truly said, He is One, and there is none else but Him. Also, to love him with the whole heart, with the whole understanding, and with the whole strength, and to love one's neighbour as oneself—that is far more than all holocausts and sacrifices." Jesus noted his intelligent answer and said to him, "You are not far off the Realm of God."²

Why, which of you, when asked by his son for a loaf, will hand him a stone? Or, if he asks a fish, will you hand him a serpent?

Well, if for all your evil you know to give your children what is good, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him? Well then, whatever

¹ Luke 17:20, 21 Moffatt.

² Mark 12:28-34 Moffatt.

you would like men to do to you, do just the same to them; that is the meaning of the Law and the prophets.¹

After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.²

And the report of what Jesus had done spread through the whole of Judaea and in all the surrounding districts.

John's disciples brought him an account of all these things; so John called two of his disciples and sent them to the Lord.

"Are you the Coming One?" he asked, "or is there another that we are to expect?"

The men came to Jesus and said,

"John the Baptist has sent us to you with this question: 'Are you the Coming One, or is there another that we are to expect?'"

He immediately cured many of diseases, severe pain, and evil spirits, and to many who were blind He gave the gift of sight. Then He answered the messengers,

"Go and report to John what you have seen and heard. Blind men receive sight, the lame walk, lepers are purified, deaf persons hear, the dead are raised to life, the poor have the Good News proclaimed to them. And blessed is every one who does not stumble and fall because of my claims."³

And he called the people and his disciples to him and said to them, "If anyone wants to go with me, he must disregard himself, and take his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to preserve his own life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for me and for the good news will preserve it. For what good does it do a man to gain the whole world and yet part with his life? For what can a man give to buy back his life?"⁴

The true spirit of Jesus' way of life is beautifully interpreted in the famous thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians:

¹ Matt. 7:9-12 Moffatt.

² Matt. 6:9-13 American Revised.

³ Luke 7:17-23 Weymouth.

⁴ Mark 8:34-37 Goodspeed.

I will show you a far better way. If I can speak the languages of men and even of angels, but have no love, I am only a noisy gong or a clashing cymbal. If I am inspired to preach and know all the secret truths and possess all knowledge, and if I have such perfect faith that I can move mountains, but have no love, I am nothing. Even if I give away everything I own, and give myself up, but do it in pride, not love, it does me no good. Love is patient and kind. Love is not envious or boastful. It does not put on airs. It is not rude. It does not insist on its rights. It does not become angry. It is not resentful. It is not happy over injustice; it is only happy with truth. It will bear anything, believe anything, hope for anything, endure anything. Love will never die out. If there is inspired preaching, it will pass away. If there is ecstatic speaking, it will cease. If there is knowledge, it will pass away. For our knowledge is imperfect and our preaching is imperfect. But when perfection comes, what is imperfect will pass away. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put aside my childish ways. For now we are looking at a dim reflection in a mirror, but then we shall see face to face. Now my knowledge is imperfect, but then I shall know as fully as God knows me. So faith, hope, and love endure. These are the great three, and the greatest of them is love.¹

In subsequent chapters we shall consider more in detail what Jesus means when he challenges his disciples to live every day as good members of God's Home.

¹ I Cor. 13:1-13 Goodspeed.

DAILY READINGS AND MEDITATIONS

SECOND DAY: SURVEYING THE ALTERNATIVES.

Matt. 3:13-4:11.

For Study and Meditation: What do you suppose actually happened to Jesus, which he later described in figurative languages? Which temptations are the most enticing, the lower or the higher? Have you ever tried to imagine what would have been the results of compromise by Jesus?

THIRD DAY: AN INAUGURAL ADDRESS.

Luke 4:16-22.

For Study and Meditation: What significance do you attach to the fact that Jesus began his public ministry in a synagogue? Why place emphasis on "the poor" and "the captives?" Why were his hearers astounded?

FOURTH DAY: LIFE IN GOD'S HOME.

Luke 6:20-38.

For Study and Meditation: Did Jesus mean for his disciples actually to live this way? Is it really possible to love enemies?

FIFTH DAY: THE COST OF SONSHIP AND BROTHERHOOD.

Matt. 10:16-28.

For Study and Meditation: How was Jesus able to foresee the sufferings of his friends? Why do good men so often suffer persecution? Is it possible to conquer fear?

SIXTH DAY: AN EARLY SUMMARY OF HIS WAY.

Gal. 5:13-26.

For Study and Meditation: What conspicuous omissions, if any, do you note? Make a list of ten modern "fruits of the Spirit."

SEVENTH DAY: AN EARLY EVALUATION OF JESUS.

Phil. 2:1-11.

For Study and Meditation: How do you account for the unique place accorded Jesus by this writer? In what sense is the name of Jesus above every name?

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Enumerate various reasons why Jesus was prompted to take up a public career as prophet and revolutionary.
2. Why should he be stirred so deeply by John's message?
3. What were his reasons for submitting to baptism?
4. What was the nature of the spiritual experience figuratively described as the descent of a dove upon him?
5. What varying interpretations of the three temptations have you heard presented?
6. What are the most convincing explanations why the various alternatives were rejected by Jesus?
7. With what illuminating summaries of Jesus' way of life are you familiar? Give an outline of one or more.
8. Which is more meaningful to you: The Kingdom of God? or The Family of God? Why?
9. What meaning do you get from the phrase: Live today as if the Family of God has already come?
10. Why is loyalty to high values so costly?

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(The books listed above may be purchased from Association Press.)

CHAPTER IV

HIS CONCEPT AND EXPERIENCE OF GOD

The God of Jesus is a holy and righteous Father. He is wise, compassionate, and zealous—that is to say, he knows, cares, and acts.

Nothing is too minute or insignificant to escape the attention of God. Jesus declares, in picturesque imagery, that God even knows the number of hairs on the heads of all his children! He is aware when a single one of the myriads of sparrows falls to the ground!¹ The physical needs of men are all known to him, and even their inner thoughts are discerned.²

God is love and has a passionate concern for all men. "Which of you men when his son asks him for some bread will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a snake? So if you, bad as you are, know enough to give your children what is good, how much more surely will your Father in heaven give what is good to those who ask him for it!"³

It is God's delight to reward men beyond what they deserve. The laborer who does not enter the vineyard until the eleventh hour is generously paid for the full day.⁴ God's compassion is deeper than that of a creditor who cancelled the notes of two debtors because they were unable to make payment.⁵ Like a gardener who spares a barren vine, and continues to prune and water it, God is willing to give man another chance.⁶

The wicked also come within the scope of God's love. His sun shines upon and his rain falls upon the unrighteous. Even to the ungrateful and evil, God is kind and merciful.

¹ Matt. 10:29, 30.

² Luke 12:30; Matt. 6:4.

³ Matt. 7:9-11 Goodspeed.

⁴ Matt. 20:1-16.

⁵ Luke 7:41-43.

⁶ Luke 13:6-9.

Men are to love even their enemies so that they may be perfect, as their heavenly Father is perfect.¹

God not only knows and cares; he acts. He is the Good Shepherd who braves dangers in the wilderness until the lost sheep is recovered, although ninety-nine others are safe in the fold.² Like a diligent woman, God, with lamp and broom, hunts for the lost coin until it is found.³

The Father sees the returning prodigal while he is still a long way off, and runs eagerly to welcome him home. Quickly the wayward son is dressed in a luxurious robe, and honored with a gala banquet. And to the sullen elder brother, the Father exclaims: "Son, you are with me always and all that I have is yours, but it was right to make merry and rejoice because of your brother, for he was dead but has come back to life, he was lost but has been found."⁴

The unique aspect of Jesus' concept of God is found in his emphasis upon the Father's passionate concern for the solitary individual. The idea of the Fatherhood of God was not original with Jesus: the Old Testament abounds with such references.⁵ But usually God is referred to as Father of the nation, and not of the individual. Dr. Joseph Klausner, a distinguished Jewish scholar, has an illuminating passage covering this point:

The phrase "Our Father, who art in heaven" is so common in the Talmudic literature as to render quotation superfluous for those with some knowledge of Hebrew. Less common, however, is the use of the singular pronoun, "My heavenly Father," though it is somewhat frequent in such expressions as: "What shall I do, when my heavenly Father hath so commanded me?" or "These buffetings have made me to love my heavenly Father"; and we also find the "diminutive of affection": "Abba who is in heaven." Jesus undoubtedly used the term "Abba who is in heaven," mainly in the same sense in which it is used in the Talmudic literature: God is a merciful

¹ Matt. 5:43-48; Luke 6:35.

² Luke 15:1-7.

³ Luke 15:8-10.

⁴ Luke 15:31, 32 Kent.

⁵ See George Foot Moore, *Judaism*, vol. 1, pp. 357-400.

father, father of all created things, and like a father he is indulgent and forgiving, good and beneficent to all, from the flowers of the field and fowls of the air, to the sinful wrongdoer, in whose death God finds no pleasure, but only in his repentance. In this also Jesus is a genuine Jew. Jesus, however, makes far more use of such expressions as "Father," "My Father," "My Father in heaven," than do the Pharisees and Tannaim; and often when he employs it, it receives an *excessive* emphasis.¹

Dr. Montefiore, another eminent Jewish scholar, writes: "We certainly do not get in the Hebrew Bible any teacher speaking of God as 'Father,' 'my Father,' 'your Father,' and 'our Father' like the Jesus of Matthew. We do not get so habitual and concentrated a use from any Rabbi in the Talmud. And this habitual and concentrated use rightly produces upon us an impression."²

Arising out of and closely related to Jesus' emphasis upon God's solicitude for the individual, is the idea that God loves even his enemies. On this point Dr. Klausner writes:

With this Jesus introduces something new into the idea of God . . . [in] the Jewish conception of God: the wicked are not worthy that God's sun should rise upon them. Not that Judaism does not also rate highly the repentant sinners; . . . But the unrepentant *destroy the world*, they break down the *moral* order, and therefore destroy the *natural* order too. If there is no righteousness in the world, it is not worth while that this world, with its sun and moon and stars and fixed laws of nature, should continue (hence the "Flood"). God is good: but he also requires justice. He is "merciful and compassionate, long-suffering and of great kindness;" but, none the less, "he will by no means acquit the guilty." It is for this reason that the Jews acclaim their God, in the same breath, "Our Father; our King:" he is not only "Father of mercies" but "King of Judgment," the God of the social order, the God of the nation, the God of history. Jesus' idea of God is the very reverse. However lofty a conception it may represent for the *individual* moral conscience, it stands

¹ Klausner, *op. cit.*, pp. 377, 378.

² *The Old Testament and After*, p. 205. By permission of The Macmillan Company, publishers.

for ruin and catastrophe for the *general* conscience, for the public, social, national and universal conscience . . . and such an idea of God Judaism could by no means accept.¹

Most Christian writers, however, reject the thesis that the God of Jesus is indifferent to justice and careless about visiting retribution upon wrongdoers. Indeed, the drastic imagery of the parable of the Last Judgment has proved to be a source of perplexity to many scholars.² It is not easy to conceive of the Father executing literal judgment upon his children in such drastic fashion: "And these shall go away into eternal punishment . . ." Just what did Jesus mean by "punishment"? How literally shall we interpret "eternal"? Concerning these questions, Dr. George A. Buttrick writes: "'Punishment' is not the strongest Greek term that could have been employed. It usually signifies 'chastisement,' and has some of the meaning of 'remedial penalty'. Similarly 'endless' is indefinite. It sometimes means 'everlasting,' but not always; and the core of its meaning is probably qualitative rather than quantitative. But when this careful discrimination of meaning has been made, it must be remembered that Jesus used not the Greek but the more uncertain Aramaic. While we cannot affirm that the words forbid all hope for the future, neither can we affirm that they encourage hope. The prospect is dark and the end is not yet! Such is the conclusion which the phrase allows."³

That Jesus looked upon God as holy and righteous seems incontestable. He had been nurtured upon the words of the prophet: "Holy, holy, holy, is Jehovah of hosts . . . For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith Jehovah, for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."⁴ The conditions of entrance into the Kingdom of God as outlined by Jesus are varying aspects of holiness and righteousness, as we shall emphasize

¹ *Op. cit.*, pp. 379, 380.

² Matt. 25:31-46. See Glover, *op. cit.*, pp. 152 ff.

³ George A. Buttrick, *The Parables of Jesus*, p. 260. By permission of Ray Long & Richard R. Smith, publishers.

⁴ Isaiah 6:3; 55:8, 9.

in a subsequent section. It is equally undeniable, however, that Jesus stresses the love of God as on a higher plane than the level of mere justice. A king deserves praise for rendering justice, but the Father reaches out in sacrificial love.

Jesus' concept of God is not derived from syllogism, but from experience. "He knows nothing of the cosmological, ontological and teleological arguments for God's existence," writes Professor Bundy. "He seems to have felt no need for such proof. He was too much prophet, too little philosopher and theologian, to feel any such need. The reality of God presented no problem to his religious thinking. On this point Jesus' thought springs from the primitive piety of his people, and to any one that would have suggested doubt concerning God's existence he would have turned in amazement . . . The stock phraseology of Christian theism does not appear in the simple religious language of Jesus. That God is infinite, unchangeable, eternal, essential, indivisible, self-existent, that He is mind, wisdom, thought, intelligence, will, purpose, power, that He is the Supreme Person, Activity, Value, Pure Being, the Absolute, the First Cause, he never said and felt no need for saying. At the foundation of his faith in God we find no rationalistic grounds."¹

The existence and accessibility of God are to Jesus as axiomatic as any other demonstrable fact. In this respect he is a normal Jew of the times. His uniqueness is found at the point of the intensity and continuity of his realization of the presence of God. Whereas his predecessors and contemporaries occasionally and sporadically reached a mountain-peak experience of communion with the Eternal, Jesus seems to dwell in unbroken comradeship with his Father. It is one thing to believe in God and to glimpse him periodically, but it is another thing utterly to trust him in every relationship of life. In all directions Jesus sees evidence of God's loving care: in nature, in history, and in the provision of daily necessities. The following words emerge out

¹ Walter E. Bundy, *The Religion of Jesus*, pp. 69, 70. By permission of Bobbs-Merrill Company, publishers.

of a deep conviction and vivid experience of the presence and power of God:

Look at the wild birds. They do not sow or reap, or store their food in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them . . . See how the wild flowers grow. They do not toil or spin, and yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his splendor was never dressed like one of them. But if God so beautifully dresses the wild grass, which is alive today and is thrown in the furnace tomorrow, will he not much more surely clothe you, you who have so little faith?¹

Jesus' crucial decisions are incomprehensible on any other basis than that of an unshaken belief in and an unbroken experience of friendship with the Father. To doubt that God speaks to him and that he can respond never occurs to him. His ethical teaching becomes the babbling of an intoxicated fanatic if he is wrong in believing that God is closer than hands or feet. Concerning "this exaggerated sense of nearness to God," Dr. Klausner writes: "A danger lurked in this exaggeration: it unwittingly confused Jesus' pure monotheism; it gave the impression that there was one man in the world with whom God was exceptionally intimate and for whom God bore especial love."²

Danger may have lurked, but surely it is obvious that out of this passionate conviction concerning the nearness and intimacy of the loving Father emerged the daring faith and sacrificial perseverance of Jesus as he sought to relieve the miseries of his people. Well may Dr. Robertson exclaim: "The greatest spiritual fact that has ever emerged in the long story of the human race is Jesus of Nazareth's consciousness of God."³

¹ Matt. 6:26, 29-31 Goodspeed.

² Klausner, *op. cit.*, p. 379.

³ James Alexander Robertson, *The Spiritual Pilgrimage of Jesus*, p. 13. By permission of Pilgrim Press, publishers.

DAILY READINGS AND MEDITATIONS

SECOND DAY: THE HERITAGE OF JESUS.

Psalms 23:1-6.

For Study and Meditation: What values would Jesus derive from these words? Was he familiar with similar passages? Which ones?

THIRD DAY: BEYOND JUSTICE.

Matt. 20:1-16.

For Study and Meditation: Is it wise for God to be generous beyond what man deserves? Does it seem to you that Jesus is here encouraging laziness? What did Jesus mean when he said, "the last shall be first?"

FOURTH DAY: SEEKING THE LOST.

Luke 15:1-32.

For Study and Meditation: How does a man elude the "Hound of Heaven?" How did the father happen to see the wayward son while he was still a long way off? Was the father fair to the elder son?

FIFTH DAY: THE CIRCLE OF GOD'S LOVE EMBRACES ALL.

Matt. 5:43-6:8.

For Study and Meditation: What does God see in an evil man that justifies his love? In what sense did he expect his followers to be perfect? What is the highest reward of a man in prayer?

SIXTH DAY: UNIQUE KNOWLEDGE OF THE FATHER.

Matt. 12:41, 42; 11:26, 27.

For Study and Meditation: How do you account for such an extraordinary claim? In what sense is it true that we can know the Father only through the Son?

SEVENTH DAY: THE ACID TEST OF FAITH IN GOD.

Mark 14: 26-36.

For Study and Meditation: What were the primary causes of his agony? Out of what kind of experience does faith of this quality emerge?

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. What have you to say about the following statement: "The ethical teaching of Jesus is valid; but, in the light of modern science, his belief in God as a Father who loves individuals is untenable?"
2. From what sources did Jesus derive his concept of a heavenly Father who cares for individuals?
3. Should God's forgiveness precede or follow penitence on the part of the evildoer?
4. Is love of enemies necessarily a denial of justice?
5. In what sense is God a "working" God?
6. What varying interpretations of the justice of God have you heard? Which of these do you regard as the most illuminating?
7. Was Jesus' communion with God different "in kind" from that of other prophets?
8. How much justification was there for the passionate belief of Jesus that he stood in an unusual relationship to God?

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4. T. R. Glover, *The Jesus of History*, pp. 87-114; 152 ff.
5. Joseph Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth*, pp. 363-380.
6. John Baillie, *The Place of Jesus Christ in Modern Christianity*, pp. 88-98.
7. J. Middleton Murry: *Jesus, Man of Genius*, pp. 66 ff.
8. Edgar S. Brightman, *Is God a Person?*

(The books listed above may be purchased from Association Press.)

CHAPTER V

HIS ESTIMATE OF HUMAN NATURE

Reverence for personality characterizes Jesus in all his relationships. He recognizes every individual as a kinsman. Since human beings are created in the image of God and therefore God is Father of all mankind, men are brothers.

This concept is the direct opposite of the traditional attitude of the pagan world toward the masses of mankind. The evidence has been summarized by Alexander Irvine in these words:

After each conquest Rome's chief interest was in the horde of slaves, who were marched through her streets, apportioned among the ruling class and auctioned in the market . . . The slaves were trotted to and fro like cattle. They were oiled and rubbed and gingered just as horses are. Those who tried to escape were branded and mutilated with red-hot irons and sharp knives . . . When old and useless they were exposed on an island on the Tiber to die of cold and hunger. Two-thirds of the population of Rome was composed of slaves. They did all the useful work and kept the patricians in idleness, wantonness, and lust. When their market value fell, they were put to the most degrading occupations. Some were chained to door-posts as door-keepers, and sold as part of the building, when the house changed owners. Every man in debt was on the road to slavery. If the debt could not be paid there was but one way out. The creditor took the debtor and sold him as a slave.

The contempt for the artisan class was not much different. The Roman view is clear enough. 'We admire a rich purple dye,' says Cicero, 'but we despise the dyer as a vile artisan.' Marcus Terentius Varro—than whom Rome produced no higher type of man—divides agricultural implements into three classes: articulate, semi-articulate, and inarticulate. The articulate were slaves and labourers, the semi-articulate were cattle, and the inarticulate wagons and tools. Plato and Aristotle would probably have similarly classified Grecian

labourers. They both considered manual toil and mechanical labour as derogatory to the status of the citizen. Zenophon held the same opinion. His words are almost identical with the words of Ecclesiasticus. 'The arts that are called mechanical,' he says, 'are naturally held in bad repute in our cities, and the people who give themselves up to manual labour are never promoted to public office, and with good reason.'¹

If we remind ourselves how highly personality is valued and respected in the inner circle of an affectionate and harmonious human household, we can more readily apprehend Jesus' attitude toward all other persons. He universalizes the virtues of the home and approaches every other individual as a member of the family.

In a passage of rare beauty, J. Middleton Murry lays bare the mind of Jesus:

But if he knew himself the son of God, why should not all men know themselves God's sons? It was not impossible. They had only to do as he himself had done. Surely it was not impossible. What man has done, man can do again. No, it was not impossible; for he had done it. All men would become sons of God, as he had become; and the Spirit would be poured out on all flesh, as it had been poured on him. It was blindingly simple. The End was indeed at hand. But what an End! Not the Wrath, but the Love of God to come. All men were to know themselves the sons of God. The world, all life, would be changed in the twinkling of an eye, as it had been changed for him. Yes, the Kingdom of God was upon them, now, at this very moment of time: and the secret of the Kingdom was that there was no King: only a Father.

He must go and proclaim it—the wonderful news. No human lips ever had such a message for mankind. He must go now, now. There was not a moment to be lost. He had but to speak, and men would hear; he had but to say the simple words "Our—Father," and all would be revealed to them.²

¹ Alexander Irvine, *The Carpenter and His Kingdom*, pp. 80–82.

² By permission of Charles Scribner's Sons, publishers.

³ *Op. cit.*, pp. 29, 30.

Life is therefore infinitely precious. If an individual has harmed a little child, "it would be far better for him if he had been thrown into the sea with a great millstone round his neck."¹ The moral of the parable of the Lost Sheep is thus stated: "So, too, it is the will of my Father who is in Heaven that not one of these lowly ones should be lost."² Several times, even in the brief record we possess, Jesus emphasizes the significance of children:

Once when little children were brought to Jesus that he might touch them, and the disciples made objection, he was indignant and said to them, "Let the little children come to me; do not hinder them, for of such as these is the Kingdom of God. I tell you, whoever will not accept the Kingdom of God like a little child, will never enter it." Then he took the children in his arms, laid his hands on them, and lovingly blessed them.³

Woman was raised by Jesus to a higher level. Her status in that era is illustrated in a letter from an Egyptian Greek to his pregnant wife, dated September or October in the year 1 A.D.:

"Hilarion to Alis . . . greetings. . . . Know that we are still even now in Alexandria. Do not fidget, if, at the general return, I stay in Alexandria. I pray and beseech you, take care of the little child, and as soon as we have our wages, I will send you up something. If you are delivered, if it was a male, let it live; if it was a female, cast it out . . . How can I forget you? So don't fidget."⁴

An ancient Jewish prayer reads: "Blessed art thou, O Lord our God! King of the Universe, who hast not made me a woman."⁵ Even Paul could not throw off completely the tradition of Tarsus that women were inferior to men.

In an illuminating passage, Dr. Glover writes:

¹ Mark 9:42 Twentieth Century Translation.

² Matt. 18:14 Twentieth Century Translation.

³ Mark 10:13-16 Kent.

⁴ Quoted by T. R. Glover, *The Jesus of History*, p. 64. Association Press.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 125.

There is no reference made by Jesus to woman that is not respectful and sympathetic; he never warns men against women. Even the most degraded women find in him an amazing sympathy; for he has the secret of being pure and kind at the same time—his purity has not to be protected; it is itself a purifying force. He draws some of his most delightful parables from woman's work, as we have seen. It is recorded how, when he spoke of the coming disaster of Jerusalem, he paused to pity poor pregnant women and mothers with little babies in those bad times (Luke xxi. 23; Matt. xxiv. 19). Critics have remarked on the place of woman in Luke's Gospel, and some have played with fancies as to the feminine sources whence he drew his knowledge—did the women who ministered to Jesus, Joanna, for instance, the wife of Chuza (Luke vii. 3), tell him these illuminative stories of the Master? In any case Jesus' new attitude to woman is in the record; and it has so reshaped the thought of mankind, and made it so hard to imagine anything else, that we do not readily grasp what a revolution he made—here as always by referring men's thoughts back to the standard of God's thoughts, and supporting what he taught by what he was.¹

In contrast to the general attitude of contempt of respectable people toward the crude masses is the evaluation of Jesus. "Below all his teaching," writes Shailer Mathews, "was the sympathy which identified Jesus with the unfortunate, the poor, and the oppressed. He saw them as they saw themselves, sheep without a shepherd, sick that must be cured, despised who must have faith in a better day to come. Jesus is out of perspective when placed against any other background than his attitude. He had no smug confidence in a prosperity-giving providence. He has suffered the fate of the prophets. The respectability of his own day killed him and the respectability of our day has appropriated him . . . Jesus allied himself with the *am-ha-aretz*, the poor, the hungry, the sinful masses, and would naturally be sensitive to the attitudes of antagonism which had grown

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 125, 126.

up between the masses and their natural leaders, the Pharisees." ¹ In this connection a modern rabbi writes:

No Jewish prophet before Jesus ever searched out the miserable, the sick, the weak, and the downtrodden in order to pour forth love and compassionate service. He went out of his way to redeem the lowly by a touch of human sympathy that is altogether unique in Jewish history. So striking was this aspect of his work that his enemies could only jeer at him for association with "publicans and sinners." ²

Concerning this point, Professor Case says:

Among Pharisees themselves there were different gradations of piety, but the garments of the "*Am ha-*" *aretz* defiled even the Pharisee of lowest station . . . A Pharisee might invite an "*Am ha-*" *aretz* to dinner (cf. Luke 7:36) without incurring defilement if the latter shed his outer garment before entering the house. But a Pharisee might not be the guest of an "*Am ha-*" *aretz* lest the host should serve food from which the tithes had not been properly separated.³

Aliens also are treated as members of the family by Jesus. In interpreting the significance of the two-fold command to love God and to love one's neighbor, in reply to a request that he define "neighbor," Jesus told the inimitable parable of The Good Samaritan. His portrayal of the priest, the Levite, and the Samaritan will live forever. In conclusion he inquired: "Which of these three do you think proved neighbor to the man who fell in with robbers?" He said, 'The man who took pity on him.' Jesus said to him, 'Then go and do likewise.'" ⁴ And thus the despised foreigner is highly exalted!

To what lower status could one fall than to become a Samaritan leper? The Samaritans were regarded as dogs by the Jews, and Samaritan lepers were looked upon as outcasts by their own people. And yet on one occasion when Jesus heals ten lepers, the only one who thanks him is

¹ *Op. cit.*, pp. 49, 58.

² Ernest R. Trattner, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

³ S. J. Case, *op. cit.*, pp. 312, 313.

⁴ Luke 10:36, 37 Kent.

a Samaritan.¹ Jesus' high valuation upon human life causes him to respond to the appeal of the Roman centurion that he heal a sick servant.² On another occasion he cures the daughter of a Syro-phoenician woman, although, if Jesus is correctly quoted by the writers of Mark and Matthew, his first reply to her request—"Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs"—sounds cruel and difficult to reconcile with his general attitude. So impressed, however, is he with her faith that he quickly cures the child.³

Sinners, even while they are yet sinners, also are of infinite worth. The record is filled with references to contacts Jesus maintained with "publicans and sinners." The collection of taxes for the foreign military government was regarded by patriotic Jews as a despicable occupation. Ostracism intensified the temptation to engage in extortion, and so denationalized Jews who took service in the tax department of the Roman Government were likely to be of the least attractive type. Dr. Joseph Klausner writes that "the whole nation, from the 'sages' downwards, loathed tax-gatherers, as representing the Roman-Edomite government, so intensely as to place them in the same category as thieves, murderers, and brigands."⁴ Yet Jesus invited himself to the home of Zacchaeus, and helped his host to recover his self-respect.⁵

Society has usually included prostitutes among the outcasts, but Jesus regards even a sinful woman as being of infinite worth. Beneath her unrighteousness, he sees a daughter of God who has yielded to lower impulses, but who may be redeemed.⁶

The author of *By An Unknown Disciple* in the following passage presents an impressive interpretation of Jesus' influence with sinners:

¹ Luke 17:16.

² Luke 7:6-10.

³ Mark 7:27-30; Matt. 15:26-28.

⁴ Klausner, *op. cit.*, p. 274.

⁵ Luke 19:1-10.

⁶ Luke 7:36-50; Mark 14:3-9; see also John 8:3-11.

I do not know how long I sat there, but, after a time, Simon came out. When he saw me he came and sat beside me, and wiped his brow with the edge of his robe.

I called my attention back and regarded him. His face was flushed and he was uneasy.

"You have not gone in?" he said. "Mary has been making a fool of herself. There is something about Jesus, I know not what. He rebuked me to my face, but I cannot bear malice. Mary has wasted her perfume, and my party is spoilt."

"What has happened?" I asked.

"I do not know. Jesus did nothing that I saw. She wept, and poured the perfume on his feet and wiped them with the hair of her head. You can never count on a woman. Their ways are always crooked."

It was then that Mary came forth, followed by that foolish fop, Sadoc, and by some other men. Her face was stained with the tears she had shed and her eyelids swollen.

Simon rose up to meet her, but before he could speak she cried out:

"Do not reproach me, Simon. I meant but to look upon the Prophet, but Sadoc's perfume was in my hand and I could not help myself."

"He rebuked me to my face because of you," muttered Simon.

"And well you deserved it, Simon. You offered him no honour. You gave him no kiss. No, not even wherewithal to wash the dust from his feet. He alone saw that that was why I did it. Even honour paid by a harlot is better than no honour at all. See, I am weeping again." And the tears fell from her eyes.

"How was I to know he would expect honour?" said Simon, and he went away into the inner room.

"Do not weep, Mary," said one of the men. "He had no right to upset you so. Who is he to forgive sins and call other people sinners?"

"He did not say he forgave my sins. He said they were forgiven. And I am a sinner. But I will never sin again."

"You are not going to desert us, Mary," cried Sadoc in distress, catching her by the sleeve.

"How can I help deserting you when I have seen something higher?" she replied . . .

"Was it because he looked at you, Mary?" I asked, my vision returning to me.

Mary turned to me in amazement.

"How did you know? Were you there? He looked at me, and I know not what came upon me. It seemed as if life were not so evil as I had thought, or men so wicked. It was as if he called me. I know not where I go, but I know I must follow."¹

Enemies likewise are children of our Father, and therefore are of priceless value. It is significant to notice that Jesus' challenge to love enemies is followed immediately with the words, "so that you may show yourselves true sons of your Father in heaven . . ."² Members of God's family deserve to be prayed for and served simply because they are kinsmen.

Jesus combines a realistic and a hopeful view of human nature. He is never blind to man's frailties and cruelties, and never exhibits unconcern or indifference in the presence of wrongdoing. He is supersensitive to imperfections, and grieves over brutalities. As the holy city flashes into view, he cries in anguish: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! murdering the prophets, and stoning those who are sent to her, how often I have longed to gather your children around me, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you refused!"³

Yet Jesus risks everything upon the conviction that man, in spite of his present stupidity and cruelty, is God's son and is capable of climbing to sublime heights. When he once awakens to a realization that he is God's son, he will act accordingly, and then limitless possibilities will be open before him. "You must therefore become perfect, even as your heavenly Father is perfect."⁴ And to those who are awakening, Jesus cries out: "You are the salt of the earth . . . You are the light of the world. A town on the top of a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do men light a lamp to put it

¹ pp. 37-40.

² Matt. 5:45 Goodspeed.

³ Matt. 23:37 Goodspeed.

⁴ Matt. 5:48 Kent.

under a bowl; they put it on a stand and it shines for all in the house. So your light is to shine before men, that they may see the good you do and glorify your Father in heaven.”¹

The thought of Jesus has been beautifully interpreted by the anonymous author of *By An Unknown Disciple*:

It was a still, calm evening. On the far-off mountains the blue light of dusk was already falling. Across the wide plain the children were beginning to drive the cattle home, and from the empty villages thin grey smoke rose straight into the air.

Jesus began to speak, and there fell a great silence . . .

“The message I have been sent to give will not be good news to the rich and the powerful. The princes and the governors, the captains and the judges, the treasurers and the counsellors, the sheriffs and all who rule over men, will not welcome it. For God has commanded me to tell you that his Kingdom is already here; yea, though you know it not, it is now in your midst. . . .”

He paused for a moment. Far off on the mountain a sheep baaed to its lamb, and the voice of a herd-child calling to the cattle came from the plain below, but no other sound broke the stillness. Jesus went on speaking.

“God has commanded me that I deliver to you a new Commandment, the law of the Kingdom, love one another. No longer, as in the days of our ancestors, are men to say you must love your neighbour and hate your enemy, for the new Commandment is that you love your enemy also. For if you love only those who love you, what credit is that to you? Do not all outcasts do this? And if you are only kind to them that are kind to you, what thanks do you deserve? That is not God’s way. He is kind to the thankless and to the bad. Therefore, I say unto you, you must love your enemies, and show kindness to those who hate you, and if men injure you, you must not seek for revenge. Our ancestors ordained, ‘An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth,’ but I say unto you, you must not even oppose wrong to wrong. You must act to other people as you would wish them to act to you. If you have injured a man, it does not

¹ Matt. 5:13-16 Moffatt.

help you to be sorry for it if he hurts you back again. If you have done a wrong, it does not make you haste to repair it if men do another wrong to you. I say unto you that wrong can never be appeased by wrong. It can be swallowed up and blotted out by kindness only. Therefore, you must be gentle to those who are cruel to you, you must be merciful, you must not show contempt, you must not judge. You must forgive and be generous. And you must never despair, but go on being kind to all men, looking for no reward. These are the laws of the Kingdom of God . . ."

He ceased. No man broke the silence. One by one the stars had begun to shine above us, and from behind the dark mountains the moon pushed her way into the high heavens. Jesus spoke again.

"If you walk in God's paths, so long as the moon endureth there shall be an abundance of peace, for God himself will teach you of his ways. See. The night has now come, and it is time for you to be in your homes. Go, and peace be upon you . . ."

There came again that noise of the scuffling of feet and the moving of a great multitude, and the people went to their homes in the darkness.

I am old now, and near my death. It is nigh three score years since I last heard him speak, but I still hear his voice, the beautiful voice reaching out of the darkness, "But I say unto you, Be kind and forgive. Seek no revenge, but love one another. Yea, never despairing, love even those who most bitterly wrong you."¹

The Family of God on earth is an actual possibility if—if men are sons of God, know themselves to be sons of God, and live as good members of the Father's Home. "After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."²

¹ By *An Unknown Disciple*, pp. 57-63. Copyright 1919, by Richard R. Smith, Inc. Reprinted by permission.

² Matt. 6:9, 10.

DAILY READINGS AND MEDITATIONS

SECOND DAY: MEMBERSHIP IN THE FAMILY.

Matt. 18:1-7.

For Study and Meditation: In what sense is a child humble? What other childlike qualities did Jesus elsewhere emphasize?

THIRD DAY: EXALTING THE FOREIGNER.

Luke 10:25-37.

For Study and Meditation: Where did Jesus get the idea for this matchless parable? In what did the wrongdoing of the priest and the Levite consist? What is the chief significance of the parable?

FOURTH DAY: EVEN THE ROMANS.

Matt. 8:5-13.

For Study and Meditation: From what source did the centurion's faith arise? Why was Jesus so impressed with this manifestation of faith?

FIFTH DAY: IN THE PAY OF THE ENEMY.

Luke 19:1-10.

For Study and Meditation: Why should a tax-gatherer be on the lookout for Jesus? What prompted Zacchaeus to make generous restitution?

SIXTH DAY: THE WOMAN WHO NEEDED FORGIVENESS.

Luke 7:36-50.

For Study and Meditation: What was it that produced penitence in this woman? Why did Jesus emphasize her faith?

SEVENTH DAY: SOIL OF VARYING FERTILITY.

Mark 4:1-9.

For Study and Meditation: Are there impossible odds against those who seek to establish the Family of God? If not, what are the chief foundations of hope?

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. What do various people mean when they say: "You cannot change human nature"? How much validity is there to these opinions?
2. To what degree is human nature essentially brutish and cruel? To what extent is human nature naturally kind and generous?
3. What did Jesus mean when he said that human nature is potentially God's nature? In what sense is man created in the image of God?
4. What happened to the human nature of Zacchaeus after he met Jesus? Why?
5. Was the human nature of the Prodigal Son the same while he was living riotously in a far country as it was after his return and restitution? Which manner of self-expression was more normal and natural for him?
6. Which statement is truer to all the facts: (1) "Man is essentially a tiger"; (2) "Man is a son of God, with infinite spiritual capacities"?
7. What practical differences did Jesus' concept of human nature make in his daily life?
8. Discuss briefly this statement: "I *know* that I am able to make drastic changes in my own responses to situations, and believe that other persons may do likewise."

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(The books listed above may be purchased from Association Press.)

CHAPTER VI

BARRIERS TO THE NEW SOCIETY

The highway to the new society is blocked by four types of obstructive thought and conduct: toward God, toward self, toward others, and toward truth. In seeking to establish the Family of God, Jesus is therefore compelled to deal with these obstructions. If men are to live every day as good members of God's Home, certain prevailing attitudes and practices must be uprooted.

Conspicuous among these barriers is indifference toward God and distrust of him. The harmony of the household is broken when children ignore the presence of the Father and refuse to manifest confidence in him. Anxiety is evidence of disbelief and distrust, and must be removed.

Therefore, I tell you, do not worry about life, wondering what you will have to eat or drink, or about your body, wondering what you will have to wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body than clothes? Look at the wild birds. They do not sow or reap, or store their food in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more account than they? But which of you with all his worry can add a single hour to his life? Why should you worry about clothing? See how the wild flowers grow. They do not toil or spin, and yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his splendor was never dressed like one of them. But if God so beautifully dresses the wild grass, which is alive today and is thrown into the furnace tomorrow, will he not much more surely clothe you, you who have so little faith? So do not worry and say, "What shall we have to eat?" or "What shall we have to drink?" or "What shall we have to wear?" For these are all things the heathen are in pursuit of, and your heavenly Father knows well that you need all this. But you must make his kingdom, and uprightness before him, your greatest care, and you will have all these other things besides. So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will have worries of its own. Let each day be content with its own ills.¹

¹ Matt. 6:25-34 Goodspeed.

Undue preoccupation with the material things of daily life is regarded by Jesus as a hindrance to spiritual communion with God. When on one occasion Martha, who "was distracted by her zeal to wait on him," complains that her sister has left her all the work to do alone, Jesus replies: "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but few things are vital, indeed one only. Mary has chosen the better part, which shall not be taken away from her." ¹

Impenitence, ingratitude, and disobedience make impossible intimate fellowship in the household circle. Not until the Prodigal Son "came to himself" could he resume affectionate relations with the Father. With brevity and clarity, the unfilial attitude is sketched in the parable of the Two Sons:

A man had two sons. He went to the first and said, "Son, go and work in the vineyard today"; he replied, "I will go, sir," but he did not go. The man went to the second and said the same to him; he replied, "I will not," but afterwards he changed his mind and did go. Which of the two did the will of the father? ²

The harmony of the household is broken to the degree that its various members concentrate upon the pursuit of their own self-centered desires. A mother who is chiefly concerned with her own comfort and pleasure disqualifies herself as a worthy parent. Jesus universalizes the domestic virtues and stresses the menace of covetousness and greed, as for example in the following passage:

Some one in the crowd said to him,
"Master, tell my brother to give me my share of our inheritance."
But he said to him,
"Who made me a judge or arbitrator of your affairs?"
And he said to them,
"Take care! You must be on your guard against any form

¹ Luke 10:38-42 Kent.

² Matt. 21:28-31 Moffatt.

of greed, for a man's life does not belong to him, no matter how rich he is."

And he told them this story:

"A certain rich man's lands yielded heavily. And he said to himself, 'What am I going to do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?' Then he said, 'This is what I will do; I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and in them I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have great wealth stored up for years to come. Now take your ease; eat, drink, and enjoy yourself.' But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your soul will be demanded of you. Then who will have all you have prepared?' That is the way with the man who lays up money for himself, and is not rich with God."¹

Jesus is emphatic in his utterances concerning the menace of attachment to money. "No man can serve two masters: either he will hate one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to one and despise the other. You cannot worship both God and wealth."²

One of the memorable parables of Jesus describes the fate of a certain rich man who refused to share his goods with Lazarus and other needy neighbors.³ The tragic parable of the Rich Young Ruler centers in the love of money.⁴ The story of this man's great refusal is illuminatingly interpreted by the author of *By An Unknown Disciple*:

When I had gone forward some distance, I saw a group of men and some mules in the distance, and made for them. When I reached them I saw that Jesus was not one of them, and that they disputed together. A young man in silk raiment stood in the middle, and urged something upon some other men, who, rougher in manner and clad in coarser garments, withstood him. Some paces behind them stood two servants, holding three mules, one of which had saddle-cloths of finely-woven wool, and stirrups of silver.

"But I have come from far," said the young man, and one of the others, whom later I knew to be Peter, answered:

¹ Luke 12:13-21 Goodspeed.

² Matt. 6:24 Kent.

³ Luke 16:19-31.

⁴ Mark 10:17-31.

"He has taught all day, and by now he is tired out. He has but this moment gone aside to rest."

The servants murmured that their master had come a day's journey to see the Prophet, and that one so rich should be honoured, and one of them beckoned to Peter and said in his ear:

"The Prophet will not like it if you keep him back. He comes to know what office he may hold in the kingdom."

Peter wavered, and one of his companions—John, I think—said, "We must not send them away. You know what he said."

Peter, undecided still, turned to me and asked me what I wanted.

"I have come to speak to Jesus, but I will go now, and come again if he is tired," I said; whereupon John said, "It will be better to show them the path." So Peter led the way up a steep hillside, and the young man went behind him with his servants and the mules close at his heels. I followed with John.

"We shall find him in the highest place, where he can see over all the earth," said John, as we climbed, and it was near the top that we came upon Jesus. By this time the sun was beginning to set, and a great peace lay upon the land. Jesus sat gazing over the wide country that lay before him, but he turned when he heard our footsteps. Peter went up to him.

"Master, these two rich men have come to speak to you," he said. "John thought you would wish to see him."

"John was right. I would turn none away. What do they need?" asked Jesus.

The young man stepped forward, and with great courtesy knelt down.

"Master," he said, "I have come to ask you what I can do to inherit eternal life?"

Jesus regarded him for a moment, and his eyes went to the men-servants and the mules, and he looked at them before he answered. Then he said:

"You have been brought up in the commandments of Moses. Keep these."

"I have observed them all," said the young man.

"There is one further," said Jesus. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

"This, too, have I done," said the young man. "What else do I lack?"

For a moment there was silence, and then Jesus said, and his eyes searched the young man as he spoke:

"There is still one thing lacking. Go and sell all that thou hast and give to the poor, and then come and follow me."

The young man rose to his feet, and stood silent, his eyes cast on the ground. The servants moved uneasily, and one of them scratched his head, as if the answer pleased him not. Jesus spoke again:

"How is it you say you love your neighbour as yourself? Is not your house full of goods, while around you your brothers, also sons of Abraham, are clad with dung and dying of hunger? Goeth there aught at all from out your house for them?"

The young man made no answer. He did not raise his eyes, and, after a moment, he turned aside. The servants turned also, and they all began to go slowly down the hill. Jesus watched them go. Then he said, and his face was tired and discouraged, and his eyes clouded:

"How hard it is for the rich to enter the Kingdom of God. I tell you, Simon, that it is easier for a camel to enter through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to come into the kingdom."

Simon was astonished.

"Who, then, can be saved if the rich cannot?" he asked.

"God is the Awakener of man. With him all is possible," said Jesus.¹

The sight of greed arouses the indignation of Jesus and brings forth withering words of rebuke: "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you make clean the outside of the cup and the plate, and then fill them with your extortion and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisees! first make clean the inside of the cup, that the outside as well may become clean. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, beautiful without, but within full of dead men's bones and utter filth."² Extortionate practices in the Temple cause Jesus

¹ *By An Unknown Disciple*, pp. 46-49.

² Matt. 23:25-27 Kent.

to overthrow the exchange tables and drive out the attendants, in protest against turning the house of prayer into "a den of robbers."¹

Idleness and laziness likewise disrupt the family spirit. In two parables Jesus vigorously condemns neglect and slothfulness.² The penalty of carelessness is laid bare in the parable of the Ten Virgins.³ Lack of sensitiveness and inactivity constitute the basis of condemnation in the parable of the Last Judgment:

"Then will He say to those at His left,

"'Begone from me, with the curse resting upon you, into the Fire of the Ages, which has been prepared for the Devil and his angels. For when I was hungry, you gave me nothing to eat; when thirsty, you gave me nothing to drink; when homeless, you gave me no welcome; ill-clad, you clothed me not; sick or in prison, you visited me not.'

"Then will they also answer,

"'Lord, when did we see Thee hungry or thirsty or homeless or ill-clad or sick or in prison, and not come to serve Thee?'

"But He will reply,

"'In solemn truth I tell you that in so far as you withheld such services from one of the humblest of these, you withheld them from me.'

"And these shall go away into the Punishment of the Ages, but the righteous into the Life of the Ages."⁴

Jesus continually stresses the menace of unbrotherly attitudes and practices. Murder is so obviously unethical that it stands condemned even in lower codes of morality. But Jesus, with illuminating insight, points out the disruptive effects of anger, contempt, uncharitable judgments, and the unforgiving spirit.⁵ Wherever these prevail the bond of the family is shattered.

Not only is the prostitution of a woman's body to a man's pleasure utterly debasing to both personalities, but even the

¹ Mark 11:15-19.

² Matt. 25:14-30.

³ Matt. 25:1-13.

⁴ Matt. 25:41-46 Weymouth.

⁵ Matt. 5:21-24; 7:1-5.

lustful look possesses the same deadly quality. For this reason, a man had better "pluck out an offending eye" than yield to anti-social desires.¹

Hypocrisy, insincerity, and trifling with truth, are regarded by Jesus as deadly enemies of the Family of God.

"When you give in charity, never blow a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and streets in order that their praises may be sung by men. I solemnly tell you that they already have their reward . . .

"And when praying you must not be like the hypocrites. They are fond of standing and praying in synagogues or at the corners of the wider streets, in order that men may see them. I solemnly tell you that they already have their reward . . .

"And when praying, do not use needless repetitions as the Gentiles do, for they expect to be listened to because of their multitude of words. Do not, however, imitate them; for your Father knows what things you need before ever you ask Him . . .

"When any of you fast, never assume gloomy looks as the hypocrites do; for they disfigure their faces in order that it may be evident to men that they are fasting. I solemnly tell you that they already have their reward."²

Least excusable of all is hypocrisy on the part of religious leaders, and Jesus reserves his most scathing words of denunciation for certain of his ecclesiastical contemporaries:

Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples,
 "The scribes and Pharisees have taken Moses' seat. So do everything they tell you, and observe it all, but do not do as they do, for they talk but do not act. They tie up heavy loads and have them put on men's shoulders, but they will not lift a finger to move them. They do everything they do to have men see it. They wear wide Scripture texts as charms, and they wear large tassels, and they like the best places at dinners and the front seats in the synagogues, and to be saluted with respect in public places, and to have men call them 'Rabbi.' . . .

¹ Matt. 5:27-30.

² Matt. 6:1-16 Weymouth.

"But alas for you, you hypocritical scribes and Pharisees, for you lock the doors of the Kingdom of Heaven in men's faces, for you will neither go in yourselves nor let those enter who are trying to do so. Alas for you, you hypocritical scribes and Pharisees, for you scour land and sea to make one convert, and when he is converted you make him twice as fit for the pit as you are."¹

The contrast in Jesus' attitude toward different types of sinners is discussed illuminatingly by Dr. Gray in these words:

He seems to me to have had two different ways with sinners. For one class of sinners—namely religious hypocrites—He had a way which at times was nothing less than utterly terrible. The scathing words which He addressed to them seem to this day to scorch and blister. "Woe unto you, for you are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but are within full of dead men's bones and of all uncleanness." Surely these are among the most terrible things ever said. I have wondered a great deal about the mystery of His attitude here. It is so utterly different to His attitude to all other sinners. Did He feel that the one hope for these men lay in their being unmasked to themselves, and did He use His whirling words in the hope that by such blows they might at last be awakened to the truth? That He loved even them, and wanted to save them, I dare not, cannot, doubt. Apparently it was a case in which love itself had to use iron and terrible tools.

But for all others, without exception, it seems to me He used only the ways of kindness, expectation, and faith. He met the most degraded sinners with hopefulness. He said very little to them about their sins. He knew that most people below the surface were very miserable about them. Though men's sins must have tortured Him, He did not parade that torture but gave of His love with unsparing hands.²

Thus we see that the coming of the Family of God in any fulness is delayed by the manifestation of attitudes and the indulgence in practices which are inappropriate in God's Home.

¹ Matt. 23:1-15 Goodspeed.

² A. Herbert Gray, *With Christ As Guide*, pp. 13, 14. By permission of Ray Long & Richard R. Smith, Inc., publishers.

DAILY READINGS AND MEDITATIONS

SECOND DAY: THE CANCER OF ANXIETY AND FEAR.

Luke 12:4-12, 22-32.

For Study and Meditation: What devastating results of fear have you known? What was the source out of which Jesus' sublime confidence emerged? Is it possible for us to capture such a radiant faith?

THIRD DAY: CONSEQUENCES OF UNBELIEF AND IMPENITENCE.

Mark 6:1-6; Matt. 11:20-24.

For Study and Meditation: What made it so difficult for his fellow-townsmen to believe in him? Why was Jesus astonished at their unbelief? What is the significance of "the will to believe?"

FOURTH DAY: PENALTIES OF DULLNESS AND SLOTH.

Matt. 25:24-30, 41-46.

For Study and Meditation: Are sins of neglect and inaction as reprehensible as overt sinful deeds? Why are men so often insensitive and sluggish?

FIFTH DAY: CESSPOOLS WITHIN.

Mark 7:17-23; Matt. 5:21-30.

For Study and Meditation: In what ways does a thought possess the quality of a deed? Is a man responsible for his inner thoughts? How many of these sins are still prevalent?

SIXTH DAY: WHEN CONFRONTED WITH GREED.

Mark 11:15-18; Luke 6:24-26.

For Study and Meditation: Where does "enlightened self-interest" end and greed begin? What other instances of greed on the part of religious people are you familiar with?

SEVENTH DAY: SIN IN HIGH PLACES.

Matt. 23:1-7, 23-33.

For Study and Meditation: Why was Jesus especially severe in his condemnation of certain religious leaders? Which of these sins are still prevalent in circles of religious leaders?

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Name the three barriers to the new society which you consider most formidable? What are your reasons?
2. In what ways, if any, does "agnosticism" or "atheism" retard social progress?
3. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, (Luke 10:25-37) what was the nature of the wrongdoing on the part of priest and Levite?
4. Why did Jesus say, "You cannot serve God and money?"
5. Which do you regard as most menacing to harmonious human relations, greed or lust or fear? Why?
6. In what ways does hatred possess the quality of murder?
7. Under what circumstances, if any, would Jesus take human life? If you cannot imagine such action on his part, why not?
8. What significance do you attach to Jesus' rejection of the program of the Zealots?
9. What barriers to the Kingdom of God which confronted Jesus have since been abolished?
10. What new obstructions to the Divine Society have arisen to menace this generation?

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CHAPTER VII

GATEWAYS TO THE NEW SOCIETY

The attitudes of children toward their parents determine in considerable measure the spirit of the home. It is therefore natural that Jesus in discussing the new society should stress the significance of right relations with the Father. Basic in his teaching is emphasis upon man's duty to love, honor, trust, and obey God.

The love of the Father for his children is set forth in numerous parables and discourses. His grief over the neglect and disrespect shown by the prodigal can be consoled only by the return of his son to a filial relationship. In deep distress, he seeks for the lost until found. Beyond the affection of a human parent is the love of God for his children. Sons and daughters in return must render homage and obedience to the Father, and acknowledge his loving care with gratitude and affection. An eager desire to know and do his will must constantly be manifested.

Jesus' own attitude toward God furnishes the most illuminating commentary on his words. The totality of the evidence produces a vivid portrait of an individual whose chief passion is to discover the mind of God and to accede to his wishes. Even in the hour of agony in Gethsemane, Jesus cries out: "Father, with thee all things are possible. Take away this cup from me. Yet not my will but thy will be done."¹

Confidence in the Father is essential to the maintenance of the family spirit. And so Jesus is constantly urging his friends to manifest more faith in the love and power of God.

Ask and you will receive, seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened to you; for every one who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks the door will be opened.

What man is there among you, who if his son asks him for a loaf, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will

¹ Mark 14:36 Kent.

give him a snake? Then if you, evil as you are, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him.¹

The apostles said to the Lord, "Give us more faith!" The Lord said, "If you had faith the size of a grain of mustard-seed, you would say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it would obey you."²

Then Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of the boy; and he was cured from that very hour. Afterwards the disciples came up to Jesus, and asked him privately: "Why was it that we could not drive it out?" "Because you have so little faith," he answered; "for, I tell you, if your faith were only like a mustard-seed, you could say to this mountain 'Move from this place to that!' and it would be moved; and nothing would be impossible to you."³

Filial attitudes flow naturally into brotherly conduct. Love toward God and the recognition that all people are his children combine to magnify love toward man. Kinsmen are of infinite worth and are deserving of affection and solicitous concern. Compassion is poured upon unfortunate members of the household, and sympathetic efforts are put forth to relieve distress.

Thus we see Jesus weeping over Jerusalem and exhausting himself in compassionate endeavors to relieve pain and sorrow.

And when he saw the city, as he approached, he wept over it, saying, "Would that you too knew even today on what your peace depends! But no, it is hidden from you! A time is coming for you when your enemies will throw up ramparts round you and encircle you and besiege you on every side and raze you and your children within you to the ground, leaving not one stone upon another within you—and all because you would not understand when God was visiting you."⁴

And Jesus continued his circuits through all the towns and

¹ Matt. 7:7-11 Kent.

² Luke 17:5, 6 Moffatt.

³ Matt. 17:18-20 Twentieth Century.

⁴ Luke 19:41-45 Moffatt.

the villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the Good News of the Kingdom, and curing every kind of disease and infirmity. And when He saw the crowds he was touched with pity for them, because they were distressed and were fainting on the ground like sheep which have no shepherd. Then He said to his disciples, "The harvest is abundant, but the reapers are few; therefore entreat the Owner of the Harvest to send out reapers into his fields."¹

Sharing is natural in the home, and the strong are glad to bear the burden of the weak. Spontaneous ministry to the needy is eulogized in the parable of the Last Judgment:

Then the King will say to those on his right "Come, you who are blessed by my Father, enter upon possession of the Kingdom prepared for you ever since the beginning of the world. For, when I was hungry, you gave me food; when I was thirsty, you gave me drink; when I was a stranger, you took me to your homes; when I was naked, you clothed me; when I fell ill, you visited me; and when I was in prison, you came to me."

Then the Righteous will answer "Lord, when did we see you hungry, and feed you? or thirsty, and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger, and take you to our homes? or naked and clothe you? When did we see you ill, or in prison, and come to you?"

And the King will reply "I tell you, as often as you did it to one of these my Brothers, however lowly, you did it to me."²

In a home love is not confined to good members of the family. A mother's devotion to her son may be deepened because of his waywardness; the anguish of a father over the sins of his daughter may be inconsolable. True love always goes far beyond the worthiness of its object. A brother must maintain affection even toward a malevolent member of the household.

The teaching of Jesus concerning love is not put forth in abstract and general terms, but with reference to specific

¹ Matt. 9:35-38 Weymouth.

² Matt. 25:34-40 Twentieth Century.

situations which confront his people. The challenge to love enemies possesses an unmistakable meaning to Jews groaning under Roman rule. The patriots of the day are seething with hatred and the desire for revenge. That they understand the radical implications of Jesus' challenge is revealed in their demand for his crucifixion and their clamor for the release of Barabbas, the patriotic revolutionary. In this setting the following words shine with brilliance:

You have heard the saying, An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But I tell you, you are not to resist an injury: whoever strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other to him as well; whoever wants to sue you for your shirt, let him have your coat as well; whoever forces you to go one mile, go two miles with him; give to the man who begs from you, and turn not away from him who wants to borrow. You have heard the saying, 'You must love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven: he makes his sun rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the just and the unjust. For if you love only those who love you, what reward do you get for that? do not the very taxgatherers do as much? and if you only salute your friends, what is special about that? do not the very pagans do as much? You must be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.¹

Forgiveness is an essential quality of a harmonious household. And so Jesus constantly stresses the spiritual value of forgiveness and urges his followers always to manifest this spirit. When Peter on one occasion asked if a wrongdoer should be forgiven seven times, Jesus replied that he should be forgiven 490 times, that is, repeatedly and indefinitely.² Jesus thereupon tells a parable of a man who after having been released by the king from paying 10 million dollars, turns around and chokes a fellow-servant who owes him 20 dollars until the money is forthcoming. When the master hears of this conduct, he has the unforgiving servant thrown

¹ Matt. 5:38-48 Moffatt.

² Matt. 18:21, 22.

into prison. "That is what my heavenly Father will do to you, if you do not each forgive your brothers from your hearts."¹

The extent to which Jesus carries his message of forgiveness is revealed in the words from the cross: "Father, forgive them, they do not know what they are doing."²

The cumulative meaning of Jesus' words and deeds is unmistakably clear: the new society can be created only as its members live in right relations with God and with each other. A third aspect of his message, however, deserves further emphasis: the significance of a man's attitudes toward himself.

The springs of righteous conduct flow from the deeps of a man's inner thoughts and aspirations. What an individual does is determined by what he has purposed in his heart, and so desire and intent possess the quality of deeds. A person is judged not only by overt acts, but by the nature of his thoughts. A poet writes of Jesus: "He saw through shams: the pretense of the complacent rich and sanctimonious—verily they have their reward, a miserable reward equal to their miserable fatuity. He saw through shams: the formalism of long robes, chief seats, broad phylacteries, vain repetitions, and punctilious observance of sacrifice and ritual, washings of cups and pots and brazen vessels, that were but a cleansing of the outside of the platter at best, and often sheer misunderstanding and spiritual loss."³

No sound tree bears rotten fruit, nor again does a rotten tree bear sound fruit: each tree is known by its fruit.

Figs are not gathered from thorns, and grapes are not plucked from a bramble-bush.

The good man produces good from the good stored in his heart, and the evil man evil from his evil: for a man's mouth utters what his heart is full of.⁴

¹ Matt. 18:35 Goodspeed.

² Luke 23:34 Moffatt.

³ William Ellery Leonard, *The Poet of Galilee*, pp. 44, 45. Viking Press, publishers.

⁴ Luke 6:43-45 Moffatt.

The pure in heart see God and apprehend spiritual values. Those who look with reverence upon personality grow in humility. Contrition and penitence make possible keen vision and robust vigor.

Blessed are those who feel their spiritual need, for the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to them!

Blessed are the mourners, for they will be consoled!

Blessed are the humble-minded, for they will possess the land!

Blessed are those who are hungry and thirsty for uprightness, for they will be satisfied!

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy!

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God!

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called God's sons!¹

Inner poise and humility intensify faith and renew courage. The passionate pursuit of personal comfort and bodily thrills ends in nauseating satiety or in cynical frustration; but devotion to the task of creating God's Home here and now on earth produces invigorating confidence and daring.

And Zebedee's two sons, James and John, came up to him and said,

"Master, we want you to do for us whatever we ask."

He said to them, "What do you want me to do for you?"

They said to him, "Let us sit one at your right hand and one at your left, in your triumph."

Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking for. Can you drink what I am drinking, or undergo the baptism that I am undergoing?"

They said to him, "Yes, we can."

Jesus said to them, "Then you shall drink what I am drinking, and you shall undergo the baptism that I am undergoing; but as for sitting at my right or at my left, that is not mine to give, but belongs to those for whom it is destined."

When the other ten heard of this they were at first very indignant at James and John. And Jesus called them to him, and said to them,

¹ Matt. 5:3-9 Goodspeed.

"You know that those who are supposed to rule the heathen lord it over them, and their great men tyrannize over them; but it is not to be so among you. Whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to hold the first place among you must be everybody's slave. For the Son of Man himself has not come to be waited on, but to wait on other people, and to give his life to free many others."¹

¹ Mark 10:35-45 Goodspeed.

DAILY READINGS AND MEDITATIONS

SECOND DAY: CONFIDENCE A PREREQUISITE.

Luke 17:5, 6; Matt. 8:5-13.

For Study and Meditation: What mountains of difficulty have you seen overcome by faithful endeavor? How do you account for the dynamic quality in faith?

THIRD DAY: COMPASSIONATE OUTPOURING.

Matt. 9:36-10:1; 14:13, 14; Luke 13:34.

For Study and Meditation: What did Jesus see in the destitute and depraved that called forth his compassion? Why did Jesus exhaust himself in sharing with the needy?

FOURTH DAY: RESTITUTION FOLLOWS.

Luke 19:1-10.

For Study and Meditation: What prompted Zacchaeus to make four-fold restoration? Just what really happened to this despised tax-collector?

FIFTH DAY: FOUR HUNDRED AND NINETY TIMES.

Matt. 18:21-35.

For Study and Meditation: Should we forgive only those who "deserve" it? Should forgiveness precede or follow penitence?

SIXTH DAY: LOVE WITHOUT STINT.

Luke 6:27-38.

For Study and Meditation: Was love toward and forgiveness of the Romans "practicable" in the days of Jesus? Be realistic in your answer.

SEVENTH DAY: THE SERVANT OF ALL.

Mark 9:33-35; 10:35-45.

For Study and Meditation: Why does man often desire to lord it over his fellows? Which brings most satisfaction, pride or humility? Why?

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. With what "proposed roads to freedom" are you familiar? Outline several briefly.
2. Upon what motivations does the newer Capitalism rely? Compare or contrast with the motivations relied upon by Jesus.
3. What are the incentives relied upon respectively by Fascism, Communism, and Socialism? Compare or contrast with Jesus' challenge to his friends.
4. Discuss briefly the methods and means utilized in turn by Capitalism, Fascism, Communism, and Socialism, and compare or contrast with Jesus' technique.
5. Summarize your impressions of what Jesus meant by the Kingdom of God.
6. Comment briefly upon the statement: "The way to build God's Home is to live every day as if the ideal society is already here."
7. Which of the family virtues, if any, do you regard as "impracticable" in business and politics? Why?
8. Which of Jesus' challenges do you consider the most rigorous and exacting?

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CHAPTER VIII

STORING UP INNER RESOURCES

Victory in times of great crisis is possible to Jesus because of vast reservoirs of illumination and strength stored up through years of communion with God and fellowship with his friends. The one incident from his boyhood which has been preserved in the records reveals his extraordinary spiritual insight as he talks with the wise men in the Temple. During the years of his active ministry he is constantly drawing upon resources accumulated in boyhood and young manhood.

One of the most illuminating of all the efforts to reconstruct the boyhood of Jesus, in the light of available knowledge about his environment and in view of his subsequent actions, is found in a volume by John Oxenham, entitled *The Hidden Years*. This fictional story is told by Azor, a younger comrade of Jesus who lives near by in Nazareth. Throughout it is characterized by a note of reality, and some of its passages possess rare beauty. In the following scene, Azor describes a morning climb with his friend:

It was still dark, and the air was crisp and cool and full of the clean sweet smell of the earth and growing things.

"We will keep our breath for the hill," said the boy. "It's steep up there," and we went in silence along the shadowy path.

I could not see it, but I followed close on his heels. He went lightly and with a joyous spring and I did my best to do the same.

As we passed through an olive grove the birds began to twitter in the trees, with tiny rustlings.

"They are saying their morning prayers," said the boy softly. "Then they will fall asleep again. It is not time for them to get up yet."

I was panting heavily when at last we came out on the crest of the hill, but the boy, though he breathed deeply and quietly, showed no other sign of unusual exertion . . .

He moved off towards the eastern side of the crest, and I

lay flat and panted-in such great gulps of the sweet strong air that I felt as if I would burst or fly.

Then the little purple and pink clouds at which I was staring turned white, with crimson edges. They looked like myriads of little white angels with glowing wings. And the ground all about me was thick with flowers. Right above me a hawk hung motionless as though watching us.

I heard the boy singing. I sat up and saw him standing at the edge of the hill-top, with his face to the sun and his arms stretched high above his head—such a beautiful slim young thing! I can see him yet—lithe and brown, and graceful as an antelope. He had slipped his arms out of his *meil*, so that it had fallen and hung now like a kirtle round his waist, leaving all the top part of him bare and of a much lighter colour than the rest, for his face and neck and arms and legs were burned brown with the sun.

His hands seemed as though reaching up to heaven for a blessing—as though it were there waiting for him and he would drag it down.

And as I got up and went to him, this was what he was singing:

“Eloi! Eloi! Eloi!

Praise! Praise! Praise!

Praise to God for His fair morning light!

Praise for the Love that kept us through the night!

Praise for the Power that guides the world aright!

And Praise, Praise, Praise, for His good gift of sight!”

As I came alongside he threw an arm round my neck without turning or stopping his singing. And, I know not why, unless it was that in all things I wanted to be like him, I, too, loosed my arms and with a shake my tunic fell down, and I stood beside him bare like himself. A tightening of his arm round my neck showed me that he was glad.

The sun had stolen silently above the eastern hills as I came to him. I caught the first glimmer of the great round golden eye above a far-away rocky crest, and as we stood there he rose, swiftly and silently, and so full of majesty and beauty that I was stricken with awe. I had never watched a sunrise like that before, for our house at Ptolemais was on the shore and the hills and the town rose up behind it.

"It is wonderful," I jerked, when the boy had fallen silent, watching eagerly, his face all golden in the sunlight.

"Yes—it is wonderful—always wonderful . . . 'As a bridegroom coming out of his chamber . . . rejoicing as a strong man to run a race!'" . . .

I had never seen any sight so wonderful as the one from that hilltop, and presently the boy told me the names of the places, and that made it more wonderful still. For the very names made one's heart beat quicker, even though the tale of its beating ran to no more than nine short years.

"Those are the hills of Lebanon . . . and that white peak is Hermon—old Father Hermon . . . The gleam over there is our great lake. You can just get a peep of it between the hills . . . And there is Tabor . . . and Gilboa . . . and the Valley of Jezreel—Gideon and Saul and Jonathan, you know—and the hills of Samaria. And over there—"

"Carmel," I cried. "Our own Carmel—and the sea, and Ptolemais . . . though you can't see it."

"Oh, it is a beautiful land . . . a beautiful, beautiful land," he cried rapturously. "See all the villages below us . . . all full of people . . . All—full—of—people"—he said it slowly and thoughtfully. And again—"Full—of—people! rich people and poor people; good people and—not so good people; happy people and sad people . . ." And he stood gazing out over the world with wondering eyes.¹

Throughout his lifetime, Jesus possesses an overwhelming conviction that God is near, accessible, and responsive. Conscious attention is essential to discovery and recognition. Dr. Rufus M. Jones has written significant words concerning this point: "Dean Inge is quite right when he says that if we spend sixteen hours a day dealing with tangible things and only five minutes a day trying to find God, it is no wonder that the tangible things of our world are two hundred times as real to us as God is. The Newtons and Poincarés and Einsteins who have enlarged the domain of mathematics have prepared themselves to see the next "leap" in their field of truth. The Bachs, Mozarts, and Beethovens who have built the invisible world of music have pre-perceived it by strenuous cultivation of their powers. The Raphaels,

¹ John Oxenham, *The Hidden Years*, pp. 11-15. Published by Longmans, Green and Company.

Michelangelos, and Rembrandts see in human faces the something different, which most of us miss, but they see only because they heighten and glorify a gift which is potential in multitudes of others. . . . Spiritual truth, certainty of God, is attained as appreciation of beauty is attained, as artistic taste is gained, as tact is acquired, as moral insight is won, by the slow accumulation of experience, which saves its gains and out of them builds a character that 'knows' by second nature. It becomes possible to send 'a shaft of vision into the very heart of the eternal mystery.'"¹

No arguments as to the existence of God are advanced and elaborated by Jesus, any more than he seeks to prove the reality of human affection and friendship. From infancy he is nurtured on stories of God's wondrous works and especially of his solicitous concern for the children of Israel. Jesus therefore finds inescapable evidence of God's presence on every hand. Bird and flower, hill and lake, rain and sunshine, calm and storm all bring him a message from the Eternal. Little children, joyous lovers, bereaved parents, burdened toilers, all reveal varying aspects of his Father. The parables and conversations of Jesus are saturated with references to the reality, love and power of God. Dr. Fosdick well says: "To pick out special details of his life to show how close and unbroken this communion was is like taking special bucketfuls from the sea to prove that the sea is wet. . . . The spirit of the Master gets its uniqueness from this fact that he was everywhere God-conscious."²

In spite of the fact that Jesus lives continually in the conscious presence of the Father, at frequent intervals he drops all other responsibilities and goes apart for special and prolonged periods of communion with God. He feels the need and covets the privilege of unbroken comradeship with the Father. Brief as the record is, numerous references are made to this practice of Jesus. Professor Robinson has compiled the following instances of prayer by Jesus:

¹ Rufus M. Jones, *Pathways to the Reality of God*, pp. 19, 20. By permission of The Macmillan Company, publishers.

² Harry Emerson Fosdick, *The Manhood of the Master*, p. 154. Association Press.

After Jesus' baptism, while he was praying, the heavens opened and the Holy Spirit came down upon him (Lk. 3:21). Early in the morning, before daylight, Jesus got up and went out and found a lonely spot and prayed there (Mk. 1:35).

After he had taken leave of them, he went up to pray (Mk. 6:46).

Taking the five loaves and the two fishes, Jesus looked up to Heaven and gave thanks (Mk. 6:41; Matt. 14:19. Cf. Mk. 8:6; 14:22; Matt. 26:26; Lk. 24:30).

Great crowds came together to listen to him; . . . but he himself used to retire to lonely places to pray (Lk. 5:16).

The rabbis and Pharisees became angry and excited; they began discussing what they could do to Jesus. It was then that he went up in the mountain to pray and to spend the whole night in prayer with God (Lk. 6:11, 12).

Once when Jesus was praying in a lonely spot, his disciples with him, he asked them "Who do people say that I am?" (Lk. 9:18).

Jesus went up the mountain to pray, taking Peter, John, and James with him. While he was praying the appearance of his face became quite different, and his clothing took on a dazzling whiteness . . . Peter and his companions had been overpowered by sleep and they awoke and saw his glorious appearance (Lk. 9:28, 29, 32).

When the seventy-two returned, they were very happy . . . Jesus said, "I have had a vision of Satan fallen like a flash of lightning" . . . Jesus said, "I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth" (Lk. 10:17, 21).

"Simon, Simon, Satan has demanded to sift you all like wheat, but I have prayed for you personally, that your own faith should not fail" (Lk. 22:31, 32).

They came to the Garden of Gethsemane. "Sit here," said Jesus to his disciples, "while I go and pray." Going on a short distance, he knelt down and prayed: "Abba (Father) all things are possible with thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will but what thou wilt" (Lk. 22:39-42).

Jesus cried out, "My God, my God, Why hast thou forsaken me?" (Psa. 22:1; Mk. 15:34).

Then Jesus called with a loud voice, "Father, into thy hands I intrust my spirit" (Psa. 31:5; Lk. 23:46).¹

¹ *The Sayings of Jesus*, pp. 174, 175. Harper & Brothers, publishers.

Alternation is practiced by Jesus to an extraordinary degree. He takes up the burden of human misery and carries it until strength is exhausted. He then drops the load and goes away for solitary communions with God and intimate fellowship with his disciples, after which he returns refreshed for further toil in behalf of those who suffer.

Fellowship in thought and prayer is a spring of life welling up within Jesus and his inner circle. To his disciples Jesus says: "Again, I tell you, if even two of you here on earth agree about what they shall pray for, it will be given them by my Father in heaven. For wherever two or three are gathered as my followers, I am there among them."¹ Out of a period of spiritual illumination comes the petition known everywhere as the Lord's Prayer:

Our Father in heaven,
Your name be revered!
Your kingdom come!
Your will be done on earth as it is done in heaven!
Give us today bread for the day.
And forgive us our debts, as we have forgiven our debtors.
And do not subject us to temptation,
But save us from the evil one.²

As Jesus realizes that his life will soon be snuffed out by those who regard him as a menace, he calls his disciples together for a final period of fellowship and prayer.

When it was evening he came with the Twelve. And when they were at the table eating, Jesus said,
"I tell you, one of you is going to betray me—one who is eating with me."

And they were hurt, and said to him one after another, "Can it be I?"

He said to them, "It is one of the Twelve, who is dipping his bread in the same dish with me. For the Son of Man is indeed to go away as the Scriptures say of him, but alas for the man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had never been born." As they were eating, he took a loaf and blessed it, and he broke it in pieces and gave it to them, saying, "Take this. It is my body."

¹ Matt. 18:19, 20 Goodspeed.

² Matt. 6:9-13 Goodspeed.

And he took the wine cup and gave thanks and gave it to them and they all drank from it. And he said to them, "This is my blood which ratifies the agreement, and is to be poured out for many people. I tell you, I will never drink the product of the vine again till the day when I shall drink the new wine in the Kingdom of God."

After singing the hymn they went out of the city and up the Mount of Olives. . . .

They came to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples,

"Sit down here while I pray."

And he took Peter, James, and John along with him, and he began to feel distress and dread, and he said to them,

"My heart is almost breaking. You must stay here and keep watch." And he went on a little way and threw himself on the ground and prayed that if it were possible he might be spared the hour of trial; and he said,

"Abba!" that is, Father, "Anything is possible for you! Take this cup away from me! Yet not what I please but what you do!"

When he went back he found them asleep, and he said to Peter,

"Simon, are you asleep? Were you not able to watch for one hour? You must all watch and pray that you may not be subjected to trial. One's spirit is eager, but human nature is weak."

He went away again and prayed in the same words as before. When he came back he found them asleep again, for they could hardly keep their eyes open; and they did not know what answer to make to him. When he came back for the third time, he said to them,

"Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? Enough of this! The time has come. See! the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of wicked men. Get up, let us be going. Look! here comes my betrayer!"¹

Through years of communion with the Eternal and fellowship with his inner circle and sharing with the distressed, Jesus stored up the reservoirs of insight and courage and endurance which enabled him to triumph in hours of crisis.

¹ Mark 14:17-42 Goodspeed.

DAILY READINGS AND MEDITATIONS

SECOND DAY: AN ANCIENT CRY OF DESPAIR.

Job 17:1-16.

For Study and Meditation: Compare or contrast this response to disaster with Jesus' attitude toward danger and suffering.

THIRD DAY: ANOTHER ANCIENT PRAYER.

Psalms 7:1-17.

For Study and Meditation: List several qualities attributed to Jehovah in this petition, and compare or contrast with Jesus' concept of God.

FOURTH DAY: A PETITION FOR CLEANSING.

Psalms 19:1-14.

For Study and Meditation: In what respects, if any, does Jesus' portrait of God differ from the picture herein presented?

FIFTH DAY: THE EARLY BELIEVERS UNITE IN PRAYER.

Acts 4:24-35.

For Study and Meditation: What is meant by the statement that the place was shaken and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit? Did their sharing of property have any relationship to their fellowship in prayer?

SIXTH DAY: STEPHEN SUSTAINED BY INNER RESOURCES.

Acts 7:51-60.

For Study and Meditation: To what do you attribute the spirit of forgiveness shown by Stephen? How was he able to refrain from hatred?

SEVENTH DAY: THE ENCOMPASSING LOVE OF GOD.

Romans 8:18-39.

For Study and Meditation: Remind yourself of the circumstances under which the first generation of Christians lived. In what ways was prayer more difficult for them than for us today?

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. What percentage of your close friends pray with regularity? Explain briefly the reasons advanced by those who pray and those who do not pray.
2. Enumerate the most significant barriers to reality in prayer.
3. In what order of importance would you list the following hindrances to prayer: carelessness, scientific concepts, licentiousness, hypocrisy, immaturity, ignorance, self-centeredness.
4. Are words necessary to genuine prayer? Under what circumstances, if any, does audible expression contribute to reality in prayer?
5. Describe briefly several vital experiences of personal prayer, and outline reasons for being able to reach these high peaks.
6. What aids to prayer have you found? Have you found silence and beauty stimulating to prayer?
7. How much significance do you attach to Jesus' practice of withdrawing for periods of meditation and prayer? Give reasons for your answer.

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(The books listed above may be purchased from Association Press.)

CHAPTER IX

THE CONTAGION OF HIS PERSONALITY

The impression Jesus makes upon his contemporaries is usually described in superlatives. The cumulative testimony is consistent and overwhelming in its presentation of him as a dynamic and unique personality. When at the age of twelve Jesus is found in the Temple talking with the religious leaders, "all his hearers were amazed at the intelligence of his own answers. When his parents saw him they were astounded."¹ At his first appearance as a teacher in the synagogue in his home town, "all spoke well of him and marvelled at the gracious words that came from his lips."² In the synagogue at Capernaum, "the people were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes."³

At one time his popularity is so great that he can no longer enter a city openly, but has to stay outside in lonely places, where people from every quarter come to him. When Jesus enters Capernaum again, after some days, it is reported that he is at home, and so many people flock to him that there is no longer room for them, not even at the door. While Jesus is preaching to them, four men come, carrying a man who is paralyzed, and as they cannot get near to Jesus on account of the crowd, they tear up the roof over his head. And when they have made a hole, they let down the bed on which the paralytic is lying.⁴

When the ecclesiastical authorities begin to plot against him, "Jesus withdrew with His disciples to the Lake, and a vast crowd of people from Galilee followed Him; and from Judaea and Jerusalem and Idumaea and from beyond the Jordan and from the district of Tyre and Sidon there came to him a vast crowd, hearing of all that he was doing. So

¹ Luke 2:47, 48 Moffatt.

² Luke 4:22 Moffatt.

³ Mark 1:22 Kent.

⁴ Mark 1:45-2:4 Kent.

he gave directions to his disciples to keep a small boat in constant attendance on him because of the throng—to prevent their crushing him. For he had cured many of the people, so that all who had any ailments pressed upon him, to touch him.”¹ Following a vigorous discussion with the scribes and Pharisees, “the people had come streaming towards him by tens of thousands, so that they were trampling one another under foot.”² On another occasion, the crowd gathers in such numbers that there is no chance for them even to have their meals. His relatives hear of it and come over to stop him, for they think that he is out of his mind.³

After Jesus heals a paralytic, “the people, one and all, were lost in amazement, and praised God; and in great awe they said: ‘We have seen marvellous things to-day!’”⁴ At the time when Jesus heals a sick girl, “the moment they saw it they were utterly amazed.”⁵ After he cures a deaf man, “the amazement was extreme. ‘He succeeds in everything he attempts,’ they exclaimed; ‘he even makes deaf men hear and dumb men speak!’ About that time there was again an immense crowd. . . .”⁶ On the occasion of a cure on the Sabbath, “the whole multitude was delighted at the many glorious things continually done by him.”⁷

Concerning another incident the record reads: “They crossed over to the other side and came to Gennesaret and moored the boat. As soon as they came ashore, the people recognized Jesus, and they hurried all over the countryside and began to bring the sick to him on their mats, wherever they heard he was. And whatever village or town or farm he went to, they would lay their sick in the market-place and beg him to let them touch just the tassel of his cloak, and all who touched it were cured.”⁸

¹ Mark 3:7-10 Weymouth.

² Luke 12:1 Weymouth.

³ Mark 3:20, 21, Goodspeed.

⁴ Luke 5:26 Twentieth Century.

⁵ Mark 5:42 Goodspeed.

⁶ Mark 7:36-8:1 Weymouth.

⁷ Luke 13:17 Weymouth.

⁸ Mark 6:53-56 Goodspeed.

Almost every page of the record bears witness to the passionate conviction of the various writers that Jesus possesses extraordinary power. The numerous passages describing his miracles cannot be uprooted, as subsequent interpolations, without wrecking beyond recognition the accounts presented by the Synoptic writers. In a notable chapter, Dr. Fosdick considers the relationship of miracle to law, from which these words are taken:

What, then, was the abiding conviction which our forefathers at their best were expressing when they thought and talked in terms of miracles? They were believing in the providence of God and in his immediate presence and activity in his world. They were saying that life so divinely ordered never can be ironed flat, reduced to the rigid limitations of the ordinary, but that always expectation must include events of "luminous surprise." They were saying that in actual experience life like a vast and varied continent has lowlands and lofty peaks; that to the eye of spiritual insight life is full of events, not ordinary but special, not tame but exciting, not familiar but marvelous. They were saying that superhuman power is here, available for use, and that when men are open to its inrush and control it is not easy to set limits to the results that may ensue. Granting all the associated aberrations and credulities of the miracle-idea, it was nevertheless our forefathers' way of saying that they believed in the living God, whose ways of working are not bound within the narrow limits of man's little knowledge. Unless it is willing to be denatured, religion cannot get on without this exciting aspect of its thought, this real and expectant faith in God, this consciousness of superhuman power, this experience of luminous events.¹

The point which is most significant and relevant to our present discussion is that Jesus undoubtedly impresses his contemporaries as possessing remarkable and unique powers. We may not be able to accept their accounts of his doings as in every detail historically and scientifically accurate, but the conclusion is simply inescapable that Jesus was such an

¹ *The Modern Use of the Bible*, pp. 157, 158. By permission of The Macmillan Company, publishers.

amazing personality that those who knew him best could explain him only in terms of the miraculous. This emphasis is conspicuous in the earliest documents, as well as in later writings.

Three additional incidents in the record make this fact crystal clear. Among a people whose foremost hope was that the Messiah would come with deliverance, no more striking testimony could be borne than to acclaim an individual as the long expected one.

On their way to the villages of Caesarea Philippi Jesus asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" They told him, "John the Baptist; others say, Elijah; some say, 'One of the prophets.'" Then he said to them, "But you yourselves, who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Messiah."¹

Within a few days occurred another incident which is described as the Transfiguration. The whole scene is meaningless except on the assumption that, in a moment of exalted fellowship with his inner group, Jesus' radiant personality so overwhelms his disciples that afterward figurative words alone seem adequate as they seek to describe their marvelous experience.

Six days later, Jesus took with Him Peter, James, and John, and brought them alone, apart from the rest, up a high mountain; and in their presence His appearance underwent a change. His garments also became dazzling with brilliant whiteness—such whiteness as no bleaching on earth could give. Moreover there appeared to them Elijah accompanied by Moses; and the two were conversing with Jesus, when Peter said to Jesus,

"Rabbi, we are thankful to you that we are here. Let us put up three tents—one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah."

For he knew not what to say: they were filled with such awe. Then there came a cloud spreading over them, and a voice issued from the cloud,

¹ Mark 8:27-29 Kent.

"This is My Son, dearly loved: listen to Him."

Instantly they looked round, and now they could no longer see any one, but themselves and Jesus.¹

Even more striking testimony as to the extraordinary impression made upon his contemporaries by Jesus is found in the incident known as the Triumphal Entry. Such an outburst is fraught with danger for those who participate in this tribute to Jesus. They know that the ever alert Roman authorities will regard such a procession, with its patriotic outcries, as an incipient rebellion. Yet the masses are so confident of Jesus' leadership that they break forth in expressions of adoration.

So they brought the colt to Jesus, and they threw their coats over it and Jesus mounted it. And many of the people spread their coats in the road, and others cut straw from the fields and scattered it in his path. And those in front and those behind shouted,

"God bless him!

Blessed be he who comes in the Lord's name!

Blessed be the reign of our father David which is coming!

God bless him from on high."²

Whatever explanations may be offered, the minimum estimate which can be placed upon Jesus is that of an exalted and dynamic personality who staggered his contemporaries with his unique insights and powers.

¹ Mark 9:2-8 Weymouth.

² Mark 11:7-10 Goodspeed.

DAILY READINGS AND MEDITATIONS

SECOND DAY: AT THE AGE OF TWELVE.

Luke 2:41-52.

For Study and Meditation: How do you account for the astounding impression Jesus made upon the learned teachers? What subjects do you suppose were discussed?

THIRD DAY: IN HIS HOME TOWN.

Luke 4:16-30.

For Study and Meditation: How do you explain the contrast between the response indicated in verse 22 and that revealed in verse 29? Just what aroused their hostility? Why?

FOURTH DAY: AMAZEEMENT AT HIS HEALING POWER.

Mark 1:21-33.

For Study and Meditation: Just what do you think happened? On what basis do you explain the various healings?

FIFTH DAY: AN INTERPRETATION FROM JOHN'S GOSPEL.

John 1:19-41.

For Study and Meditation: In what respects, if any, does this picture differ from the portrait of the Synoptists?

SIXTH DAY: SAUL'S VISION.

Acts 22:1-21.

For Study and Meditation: How do you account for the revolution in Saul's attitude? How would you describe what happened to him on the Damascus road? What were the primary incentives of his subsequent career?

SEVENTH DAY: A BIOGRAPHICAL EULOGY.

Phil. 1:21-24; 2:5-11; 3:8-14.

For Study and Meditation: Meditate upon these words from a Jewish pen. What did Paul mean by saying, "For me to live is Christ"?

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Who is the most magnetic and dynamic personality you know? Among contemporary leaders, which one do you consider to be the most appealing personality?

2. Describe briefly the qualities which produce extraordinary personalities.

3. Express comparative opinions of the personalities of Herbert Hoover, Eugene Debs, Henry Ford, William E. Borah, Harry Emerson Fosdick, Benito Mussolini, Stalin, and Mahatma Gandhi.

4. In what respects do contemporary standards of greatness agree with Jesus' estimate of the qualities required for leadership? In what respects do they differ?

5. List several qualities in Jesus which profoundly impressed his contemporaries. Which of these do you consider most significant?

6. Describe briefly the outstanding interpretations of Jesus' miracles. Which of these is most appealing to you? Why?

7. What present-day achievements, if any, would have been regarded by our ancestors as "miracles"?

8. What significance did Jesus attach to his own miracles?

9. Is a literal acceptance of the texts describing Jesus' miracles essential to present-day allegiance to Jesus and his way of life? Give reasons for your answer.

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CHAPTER X

DEALING WITH OPPOSITION

When Jesus rejects the proposed solutions being offered by his contemporaries and begins to proclaim a new way of life, he thereby incurs the hostility of the religious leaders of the day. Deviation from ancient customs and orthodox standards has always been punished with severity. To the established authorities, Jesus appears as a revolutionary bent upon the destruction of cherished institutions. On four grounds he is regarded as a dangerous agitator.

First, he is considered a heretic and blasphemer because of his religious attitudes and practices. Jesus is constantly enraging the ecclesiastic authorities because of his unorthodox conduct on the Sabbath. In an earlier section we outlined some of the rules and regulations concerning Sabbath observance which were regarded as essential by the Pharisees. While Jesus faithfully observes the Sabbath, he does not regard as binding the numerous petty regulations which formed part of the oral traditions of the elders.

He happened to be passing through the wheat fields on the Sabbath, and his disciples began to pick the heads of wheat as they made their way through. And the Pharisees said to him,

"Look! Why are they doing what it is against the law to do on the Sabbath?"

He said to them,

"Did you never read what David did, when he was in need and hungry, he and his men? How is it that he went into the house of God when Abiathar was high priest, and ate the Presentation Loaves, which it is against the law for anyone but the priests to eat, and gave some to his companions too?"

And he said to them,

"The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath, and so the Son of Man is master even of the Sabbath."

He went again to a synagogue, and there was a man there with one hand withered. And they were watching him closely, to see whether he would cure him on the Sabbath,

in order to get a charge to bring against him. He said to the man with the withered hand,

"Get up and come forward."

And he said to them,

"Is it allowable to do people good on the Sabbath, or to do them harm? To save life or to kill?" But they made no answer. And he looked around at them with anger, hurt by their obstinacy, and he said to the man,

"Hold out your hand!"

And he held it out, and his hand was cured.¹

Secondly, Jesus is regarded as a menace because he threatens to tear down the walls by means of which the Jews seek to maintain their racial purity. The inroads made by Hellenistic culture cause the orthodox Jewish leaders to insist even more vigorously upon numerous taboos and restrictions against other races.² They are scandalized by Jesus' practice of mingling freely with members of other races and considered his attitude as a perilous innovation. At the beginning of his public ministry, he infuriates his fellow townsmen by reminders that God is as deeply concerned about other peoples as he is with the Jews:

"I tell you in solemn truth," He added, "that no Prophet is welcomed among his own people. But I tell you in truth that there was many a widow in Israel in the time of Elijah, when there was no rain for three years and six months and there came a severe famine over all the land; and yet to not one of them was Elijah sent: he was only sent to a widow at Zarephath in the Sidonian country (1 Kings xvii.). And there was also many a leper in Israel in the time of the Prophet Elisha, and yet not one of them was cleansed, but Naaman the Syrian was" (2 Kings v.).

Then all in the synagogue, while listening to these words, were filled with fury. They rose, hurried Him outside the town, and brought Him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, to throw Him down the cliff; but He passed through the midst of them and went his way.³

¹ Mark 2:23-3:5 Goodspeed.

² See Acts 10:28.

³ Luke 4:24-30 Weymouth.

Thirdly, Jesus' failure to observe the law which forbade contact with the ceremonially unclean is a source of offense to his ecclesiastical contemporaries.

As he went along, he saw Levi, the son of Alphaeus, sitting in the tax-office, and said to him: "Follow me." Levi got up and followed him.

And later on he was in his house at table, and a number of tax-gatherers and outcasts took their places at table with Jesus and his disciples; for many of them were following him. When the Teachers of the Law belonging to the party of the Pharisees saw that he was eating in the company of such people, they said to his disciples:

"He is eating in the company of tax-gatherers and outcasts!" Hearing this, Jesus said:

"It is not those who are in health that need a doctor, but those who are ill. I did not come to call the religious, but the outcast."¹

Fourthly, Jesus is opposed on grounds of patriotism. The Sadducees and Herodians consider him a menace to their security, while the Zealots and other super-patriots look upon him as a slacker and a traitor in urging love of the Romans. To conservatives and radicals alike Jesus' program is highly objectionable. Thus we read: "Then the Pharisees left the synagogue and immediately consulted with the Herodians about Jesus, with a view to putting him to death."² And again: "Just then some Pharisees came up and said to him, 'Go! Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you!'"³

The attitude of Jewish patriots is revealed in their demand for the release of the rebel Barabbas and their cry for the crucifixion of Jesus:

The High Priests, however, and the Elders urged the crowd to ask for Barabbas and to demand the death of Jesus. So when the Governor a second time asked them, "Which of the two shall I release to you?"—they cried, "Barabbas!"

¹ Mark 2:14-17 Twentieth Century.

² Mark 3:6 Goodspeed.

³ Luke 13:31 Goodspeed.

"What then," said Pilate, "shall I do with Jesus, the so-called Christ?"

With one voice they shouted, "Let him be crucified!"

"Why, what crime has he committed?" asked Pilate.

But they kept on furiously shouting, "Let him be crucified!"¹

"It is certain," writes a modern Jewish scholar, "that the priests did not see in Jesus anything more than an ordinary rebel: they did not recognize his special spiritual nature; what they did they did, in all simplicity, in order to save the people from the cruel vengeance of Pilate, who was on the watch for some possible excuse to demonstrate the power of Rome and the nugatory nature of Jewish autonomy in any matter of political importance."²

Jesus is not only confronted with the hostility of the Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians, and Zealots, he is constantly faced with misunderstanding and opposition on the part of his relatives and friends. On one occasion his relatives come to take him home because they think he has become insane.³ His teaching is constantly being misinterpreted by his disciples. When he speaks of the Kingdom of God, they think he is referring to a kingdom in which they will sit upon thrones of gold in honored positions at the right and left of their sovereign. Once Jesus feels impelled to rebuke Peter sharply for his opposition: "Peter took him and began to reprove him for it, but he turned on him and noticing his disciples reprov'd Peter, telling him, 'Get behind me, you Satan! Your outlook is not God's but man's.'"⁴

Instead of being intimidated by his opponents, Jesus is vigorous in his denunciation of wrongdoing wherever he confronts it. Numerous passages in the record reveal him as being fearless in his attacks upon evil, as when he exclaimed: "You brood of snakes! how can you, bad as you are, utter anything good?"⁵

¹ Matt. 27:20-23 Weymouth.

² Joseph Klausner, *op. cit.*, p. 345.

³ Mark 3:21 Goodspeed.

⁴ Mark 8:32, 33 Moffatt.

⁵ Matt. 12:34 Goodspeed.

Then because they had not repented, Jesus began to denounce the cities where most of his marvellous deeds had been performed: "Woe to you Chorazin! Woe to you Bethsaida! for had the marvellous deeds that have been performed in you been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented in sackcloth and ashes. I tell you that it will be better for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you. Will you, Capernaum, be exalted to the sky? No, you will go down to destruction! For had the marvellous deeds performed in you been done in Sodom, it would have remained standing until this day. So I tell you, it will be better on the day of judgment for the people of Sodom than for you."¹

Jesus never seeks to obscure sharp differences of opinion and point of view. He is never willing to avoid conflict by abandoning his principles. While he is vigorously opposed to the use of violence and warfare, he does not believe in peace at any price. Indeed, loyalty to his way of life is paramount and must be maintained in the face of any hostility, while all other loyalties must be subordinated.

"Do not suppose that I came to bring peace to the earth: I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I came to set a man against his father, A DAUGHTER AGAINST HER MOTHER, AND A DAUGHTER-IN-LAW AGAINST HER MOTHER-IN-LAW; AND A MAN'S OWN FAMILY WILL BE HIS FOES (Mic. vii. 6). Any one who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and any one who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and any one who does not take up his cross and follow where I lead is not worthy of me."²

¹ Matt. 11:20-24 Kent.

² Matt. 10:34-38 Weymouth.

DAILY READINGS AND MEDITATIONS

SECOND DAY: CONDEMNED AS A BLASPHEMER.

Mark 2:1-12.

For Study and Meditation: What did Jesus mean when he said, "Thy sins are forgiven?" Why were the scribes so indignant? Just what is blasphemy?

THIRD DAY: AN OBJECT OF SUSPICION AND HOSTILITY.

Mark 2:13-28.

For Study and Meditation: What was wrong in eating with sinners? Why? What is the value of fasting? Wherein did Jesus' attitude toward fasting differ from the religious leaders?

FOURTH DAY: A PERILOUS PARABLE.

Mark 12:1-12.

For Study and Meditation: What is the real meaning of this parable? Why should it arouse the antagonism of the scribes?

FIFTH DAY: A NEW CONCEPT OF DEFILEMENT.

Mark 7:1-23.

For Study and Meditation: Why had scribes "come from Jerusalem"? In what respects were they infuriated by Jesus?

SIXTH DAY: CONFRONTED WITH A TRAP.

Mark 12:13-17.

For Study and Meditation: What answer would have been given by a Sadducee? A Pharisee? A Zealot? Did Jesus really answer the question or skilfully evade their plot? How do you tell which things belong to Caesar?

SEVENTH DAY: DEALING WITH EXPLOITATION AND DESECRATION.

Mark 11:15-19.

For Study and Meditation: Make a careful comparison of the wording in the following versions:

American Revised: And they come to Jerusalem: and he entered into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and them that bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold the doves; and he would not suffer that any man should carry a vessel through the temple.

And he taught, and said unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations? but ye have made it a den of robbers.

Moffatt: Then they came to Jerusalem, and entering the temple he proceeded to drive out those who were buying and selling inside the temple; he upset the tables of the money-changers and the stalls of those who sold doves, and would not allow anyone to carry a vessel through the temple; also he taught them. "Is it not written," he asked, "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations? You have made it a den of robbers."

Goodspeed: When they reached Jerusalem, he went into the Temple, and began to drive out of it those who were buying or selling things in it, and he upset the money-changers' tables and the pigeon-dealers' seats, and he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the Temple. And he taught them, and said, "Does not the Scripture say, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'? But you have made it a robbers' cave."

Weymouth: They reached Jerusalem, and entering the Temple He began to drive out the buyers and sellers, and upset the money-changers' tables and the stools of the pigeon-dealers, and would not allow any one to carry anything through the Temple. And He remonstrated with them.

"Is it not written," He said,

"'MY HOUSE SHALL BE CALLED THE HOUSE OF PRAYER FOR ALL THE NATIONS' (Isa. lvi. 7)? But you have made it what it now is—A ROBBERS' CAVE" (Jer. vii. 11).

Twentieth Century: They came to Jerusalem. Jesus went into the Temple Courts, and began to drive out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of the pigeon-dealers, and would not allow any one to carry anything across the Temple Courts. Then he began to teach.

"Does not Scripture say," he asked,

"'My House shall be called a House of Prayer for all the nations'? But you have made it 'a den of robbers.'"

Kent: Then Jesus went into the Temple and drove out those who were buying and selling there. He upset the tables of the money-changers, and the benches of those who sold doves, and would allow no one to carry a vessel through the Temple. For he said to them, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations?' But you have made it a den of robbers!"

King James Version: And they come to Jerusalem: and Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold doves; And would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple.

And he taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves.

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Do you know of modern instances where religious prophets have been considered dangerously unorthodox? If so, why have they?

2. At the present time what races are most exclusive and zealous in their efforts to preserve their separateness? Is racial exclusiveness more or less pronounced in the United States now than among the ancient Jews? Give reasons.

3. Have you heard of persecution because of failure to observe traditional taboos against other races? If so, give brief descriptions of the main facts?

4. Are there class lines in modern America comparable to those existing in the days of Jesus? Give reasons for your answer.

5. Compare the attitudes of "one hundred per cent" patriots in the United States at the present time with those prevailing in Palestine while Jesus was alive. What contrasts, if any, deserve emphasis?

6. Have individuals or groups on your campus met with hostility because of attitudes similar to those of Jesus? If so, state why you think so.

7. Just how could Jesus have avoided opposition and hostility on the part of the Sadducees? The Pharisees? The Zealots?

8. Outline what you think would have been the primary results if Jesus had conformed to the demands of his respective opponents.

9. Does Jesus' use of harsh language against wrongdoers seem to you inconsistent with his challenge to live every day as a good member of God's Home? If so, why? If not, why not?

10. Review the various phrasings of Jesus' cleansing of the temple given on page 108 and compare with the following translations of John 2:14-16:

American Revised: And he found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting: and he made a scourge of cords, and cast all out of the temple, both the sheep and the oxen; and he poured out the changers' money, and overthrew their tables; and to them that sold the doves he said, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house a house of merchandise.

Moffatt: There he found, seated inside the temple, dealers in cattle, sheep and pigeons, also money-changers.

Making a scourge of cords, he drove them all, sheep and cattle together, out of the temple, scattered the coins of the brokers and upset their tables, and told the pigeon-dealers, "Away with these!

My Father's house is not to be turned into a shop!"

Goodspeed: In the Temple he found the dealers in cattle, sheep, and pigeons, and the money-changers sitting at their tables. And he made a lash out of rope, and drove them all, sheep and cattle, out of the Temple, and scattered the money-changers' coins on the ground, and overturned their tables. And he said to the pigeon-dealers,

"Take these things away! Do not turn my Father's house into a market!"

Weymouth: And He found in the Temple the dealers in cattle and sheep and in pigeons, and the money-changers sitting there. So He plaited a whip of rushes, and drove all—both sheep and bullocks—out of the Temple. The small coin of the brokers He upset on the ground and overturned their tables. And to the pigeon-dealers He said,

"Take these things away. Do not turn my Father's house into a market."

Twentieth Century: In the Temple Courts he found people who were selling bullocks, sheep, and pigeons, and the money-changers at their counters. So he made a whip of cords, and drove them all out of the Temple Courts, and the sheep and bullocks as well; he scattered the money of the money-changers, and overturned their tables, and said to the pigeon-dealers:

"Take these things away. Do not turn my Father's House into a market house."

King James Version: And found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting:

And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables; And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise.

11. Do you conclude that Jesus used physical force against the men or only against the animals? If the former, how do you account for his single-handed victory over numerous aroused opponents?

12. If he used physical force against the men, was his action contrary to his own teaching? If so, why? If not, why not?

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(The books listed above may be purchased from Association Press.)

CHAPTER XI

WHY DOES HE GO TO THE CROSS?

That a wise and good man should be hounded to death as a dangerous malefactor by respectable and devout ecclesiastics seems incredible. Yet such a fact should cause no surprise to an acute observer of history and contemporary life. The most saintly of men have again and again been excoriated, imprisoned and executed as enemies of the established order.

When Jesus refuses to conform to prevailing customs and advocates radical proposals, he invites relentless hostility. No modern capitalist is more alarmed by Bolshevism than devout Jews were enraged by Jesus. To his contemporaries the revolutionary from Nazareth seems to threaten the basic foundations of religion, morality and patriotism. His death is considered a necessary measure of public safety.¹

From this time Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer much cruelty from the Elders and the High Priests and the Scribes, and be put to death, and on the third day be raised to life again. Then Peter took Him aside and began taking Him to task.

"Master," he said, "God forbid; this will not be your lot."

But he turned and said to Peter,

"Get behind me, Adversary; you are a hindrance to me, because your thoughts are not God's thoughts, but men's."²

These words are spoken just after the memorable discussion concerning Jesus' identity, during which Peter acclaim him as Messiah, the Greek translation being Christ. They are followed by the passage in which Jesus recounts the costs of discipleship, and challenges his disciples to take up their own cross and follow.

Jesus is now at the crisis of his career. He has come north into the territory of Philip, where the enmity of the authorities is less pronounced, and where he has a more

¹ See John 18:14.

² Matt. 16:21-23 Weymouth.

favorable opportunity for long periods of fellowship with his disciples and further training of them. The handwriting is on the wall. Doom is imminent if he continues to flout himself in the face of enraged ecclesiastics.

Why, then, does Jesus decide to return to the most dangerous spot of all, the Holy City, at the period of the Pass-over festival? He realizes vividly the supreme peril of placing himself within reach of his most ruthless enemies, and twice repeats his warning of approaching crucifixion.¹ Unfortunately, the record does not tell us plainly what his reasons were for such a dangerous course of action. The clearest fact of all is the passionate conviction which sweeps over Jesus that at any cost he must again bear witness in Jerusalem. Just why, we cannot be sure. Mr. J. Middleton Murry has expressed the following opinion:

He had but to follow his own ineffable destiny to know that the conception of the suffering Messiah was true. He was to be the Messiah and he suffered; he was to suffer yet more. God's only Son was alone with his strange and wonderful destiny—to suffer and to die and to rise again. He must go to Jerusalem, to the city of God, to the fortress of the old covenant, and proclaim his message there. That he would die proclaiming it, there was no doubt: the Pharisees who had driven him into exile from his own dear land of Galilee, where their power was small, would exact the uttermost from him in the Holy City, where their power was great. Into the living center of the old religion of Israel he must go, and there claim the new knowledge of God. The decision was inevitable: where could the Son of God die, but on God's altar.²

Another point of view is set forth by Dr. J. A. Robertson:

It was loyalty to the supreme cause, the Kingdom of God—a motive which transcends and includes the others—that was the impulse which set His face towards home and towards the Holy City, at the end of the struggle by the sea-shore at Tyre. His vocation was to establish the Kingdom of God in

¹ Matt. 17:23; 20:19.

² *Op. cit.*, pp. 183, 184.

the world. Could he possibly do so, unless he himself lived its life, perfectly realised its spirit and its law? It was when it became clear that to carry such a perfect obedience through to the end, within the borders of Palestine and in the heart of holy Judaism, was to lead to his physical extinction, that the question shaped itself before his mind: May I not achieve that perfect fulfilment of the Kingdom's law in another environment where the will of God may find a readier acceptance? To fling away, prematurely, as it seemed, the Divine gifts with which God had dowered his soul in measureless flood, by remaining in the station which birth and race prescribed, was a grave responsibility. Was that the way in which they could be made most effective in the accomplishment of God's will? Might he not abandon his own people, in whose midst the achievement of loyalty to the spirit of loyalty was *hopeless* without violent death, for some Gentile community where its achievement might be *possible* without this sacrifice? This was the battle which he fought out by the shores of Tyre. This was the last crucial temptation, a demon clad in God-like guise, soliciting his homage and allegiance.¹

At any rate, Jesus throws caution to the winds, and sets his face toward Jerusalem. On the journey southward he is told about certain Galilean revolutionaries "whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices."² As he nears Jerusalem he makes preparation for a spectacular entry.

When Jesus and those with him were approaching Jerusalem and had reached Bethpage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples ahead, saying, "Go into the village over there, and as soon as you enter it you will find tied on the street a colt which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If any one asks you, 'Why are you doing that?' say, 'The Master needs it and will immediately send it back.'"

So they left him and found a colt tied outside a door on the street. As they untied it, some of the men standing there said, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" The disciples answered as Jesus had bidden them, and the men let them

¹ *Op. cit.*, 254, 255.

² Luke 13:1.

take it. When they had brought it to Jesus, they threw their cloaks upon it, and he mounted it. Many also spread their clothes on the road, while others strewed leafy branches cut from the fields; and people in front and behind kept shouting:

God save him!

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!

Blessed is the coming Kingdom of our father David!

May God on high save him!¹

On the next day occurs the scene in the Temple when Jesus casts out the money-changers. Let Professor Moffatt describe what follows:

By this time the authorities were at their wits' end. All parties had sunk their differences in the common desire to suppress Jesus. They were jealous and afraid of his influence over the people, which threatened to undermine their own authority and disturb their vested interests. They had been publicly exposed by him. It was humiliating and intolerable, especially to the Sadducees. He had dared to warn and denounce them in the name of God, and they were resolved to put him out of the way. But they had to be cautious. To arrest him in the city might mean a popular riot among the crowds which had gathered for the festival. And the festival began on Friday, that is, the passover, followed by the statutory seven days during which unleavened bread alone could be eaten. Almost at the last moment they got their chance. On this Wednesday Judas Iscariot unexpectedly offered to betray his master to them. Why, we do not know. But in this way they learned his secret haunt outside the city. No time was to be lost. Plans were at once made to seize him upon the following night, before he could do or say anything more that was obnoxious to their influence.²

After a farewell meal with his disciples on Thursday evening, Jesus retires to an olive-grove in Gethsemane. As is his custom when confronted with a supreme crisis, he seeks solitude. In the stillness of the night he listens to the

¹ Mark 11:1-11 Kent.

² James Moffatt, *Everyman's Life of Jesus*, pp. 180, 181. By permission of Ray Long & Richard R. Smith, publishers.

voice of God. Never was his mind keener, never did his heart go out with a deeper yearning. The people are like sheep without a shepherd. Everywhere are hunger and pain, envy and greed, cruelty and lust, hatred and strife, blasphemy and irreverence. As a hen shelters her brood under her wings, he would draw all men unto his way of love. But they will not come. The multitudes are utterly indifferent; the men of authority are bitterly hostile. His own loved ones do not understand, and as for his disciples, even in his hour of supreme need they are deep in slumber. The thought keeps coming that perhaps he has been mistaken in his reliance on love. His passionate effort to build the Family of God seems to be in vain. Why go on?

The one thing that seems certain is his own approaching doom. Unmistakably clear is the evidence of implacable hostility on the part of the ecclesiastical leaders. Obsessed with hatred and fear, they regard him as an enemy of God and the people, and with conscientious zeal are plotting his speedy destruction. What good will be accomplished by going ahead? Why not placate his foes by necessary adjustments? They, too, are really seeking the reign of God. Will it not be wise to make the best of the prevailing situation, while clinging to the hope that the day will soon come when a man can follow his ideals? Why throw away one's influence? Why forfeit the chance to continue doing good? Why court martyrdom? After all, a man must live. Surely it is not the will of God that an innocent man should die an ignominious death on the cross. No wonder that drops of blood stand out on his forehead. "If it be possible," he cries unto God, "if it be possible, save me from defeat and shame!"

In the darkness of the night two alternatives appear before Jesus with the brilliance of the noon-day sun. Life or a way of life! He must choose. Live as his contemporaries live or die. Blindness and intolerance and fear have always refused to permit a man to treat every other human being under every circumstance as a member of the family, worthy

to be loved, forgiven, trusted. So the Jewish leaders give Jesus his choice. Live as they live or die.

Out of the black silence comes light from the Eternal. A great quietness comes over Jesus. It is the will of God that a man should faithfully follow the way of love. The purpose of life is to build the divine community. The way to create the ideal society is to live to-day as if it is already a reality. Live this hour as a good member of the Family of God. Depend upon love. Run the risks. Accept the consequences. Have confidence in God and faith in man. Rather than forsake the way of love it is better for a man to die.

Yet Jesus passionately longs to live. The theory that the crucifixion of Jesus was predestined and preordained and that he went through life as a fated victim belies the facts. If literally interpreted, this theory transforms him into a mere automaton, which is unthinkable in the light of the record. Likewise, the theory that his death was required in order to appease the wrath of an angry God is repugnant. And the explanation that the Divine Law demands a purchase price to atone for the sins of mankind seems legalistic and artificial.

An illuminating interpretation of the tragic and triumphant scene in Gethsemane is presented by the author of *By an Unknown Disciple*:

It was nigh sunset when I crossed the stream, and began to clamber up the hill between the gnarled trunks of the olive trees. The Garden of Gethsemane was sunk in silence . . .

"Jesus," I stammered, "I have come to warn you. I have seen Caiaphas, and you must flee."

His grip tightened on my shoulder.

"Where shall I flee?" he asked. "Can a man flee from the will of God? If I climb up to heaven his hand shall take me, if I dig into hell is he not there also?" and at that I knew I should not prevail.

"It is death if you stay," I whispered.

"God is our guide even unto death," he answered, and then a great trembling fell upon him, so that he shook beside me, and I trembled too, afraid to speak.

"My soul is full of trouble, but what can I say?" he cried. "I have prayed to God to save me, but it may be for his purpose that I have come to this hour. He gave me command what to say and in what words to speak, and I have given the message. If I must die I obey, for in obedience to him is the life of the ages. But I am in fear."

The sweat broke out on his face, and I, sick at heart at his woe, could only hold my peace and listen, helpless . . .

"Is there no way of escape? Must you die?" I cried, but he answered,

"The gifts of God cannot be cast away. If he gives death, shall I not take it?" And then he cried out with a loud and bitter cry,

"I found all men drunken, and none found I athirst. I have poured out my soul, and no man heeds. Oh my people what have I done that you will not love me? What more ought I to do? My soul grieves for you because you are blind in your hearts, but in what have I afflicted you that you will not see?"

The sweat poured down his face, and he wiped it off with his sleeve . . .

Jesus stood there silent, watching the colour die from the earth, and I stood behind him, silent also, waiting. When he spoke again I saw that he was far from me.

"It is defeat," he said. "Even those whom God has given me have not seen my meaning. I am to be reckoned among the lawless. But the world is not left without a judge, for when men understand the message they will judge themselves, and in sorrow will unite to bring the kingdom to pass. Hate cannot be triumphant. It is too feeble. It has none save itself to rejoice in victory. But love, being born of God, is strong and courageous to suffer. I fail, but others will conquer, for God yet liveth."

A tawny owl swept out from under the dark trees, and swooped past into the valley seeking its meat. Jesus watched its flight, and then he said,

"The world is beautiful, and it is hard to die. I have seen death come to other men, and now it comes to me. I cannot put aside that fear. It is a way that all must pass," and then he turned to me and said,

"I go apart alone. No man can help me now, but surely God will listen?"

And he left me and went away across the open, and passed into the shadow under the crooked boughs of the olives.¹

Jesus longs to live, but more passionately he desires to be a loyal member of God's Home:

He withdrew about a stone's throw and knelt in prayer, saying,

"Father, if it please thee, take this cup away from me. But thy will, not mine, be done." (And an angel from heaven appeared to strengthen him; he fell into an agony and prayed with greater intensity, his sweat dropping to the ground like clots of blood.) Then rising from prayer he went to the disciples, only to find them asleep from sheer sorrow.

He said to them,

"Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray that you may not slip into temptation."

While he was still speaking, there came a mob headed by the man called Judas, one of the twelve.

He approached in order to kiss Jesus, but Jesus said to him, "Judas! would you betray the Son of man with a kiss?"

Now when the supporters of Jesus saw what was going to happen, they said, "Lord, shall we strike with our swords?"

And one of them did strike the servant of the high priest, cutting off his right ear. Jesus said, "Let me do this at least," and cured him by touching his ear.

Then he said to the high priests and commanders of the temple and elders who had appeared to take him, "Have you sallied out to arrest me like a robber, with swords and clubs? Day after day I was beside you in the temple, and you never stretched a hand against me. But this is your hour, and the dark Power has its way."

Then they arrested him and led him away inside the house of the high priest.²

Within a few terrible hours the travesty of a trial is ended; the roar of the crowd frees Barabbas and sends Jesus to his doom, while Pilate the Roman, in a cowardly gesture, vainly washes his hands of responsibility.

Two criminals were also led out with him to be executed, and when they came to the place called The Skull they cruci-

¹ *Op. cit.*, 186-190.

² Luke 22:41-54 Moffatt.

fied him there with the criminals, one at his right and one at his left.

Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, they do not know what they are doing." Then they distributed his clothes among themselves by drawing lots. The people stood and looked on, and even the rulers sneered at him, saying, "He saved others, let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, the Chosen One!"

The soldiers made fun of him too by coming up and handing him vinegar, saying, "If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself." (For there was an inscription over him in Greek and Latin and Hebrew characters,

THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.)

One of the criminals who had been hung also abused him, saying, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us as well." But the other checked him, saying, "Have you no fear even of God? You are suffering the same punishment as he. And we suffer justly; we are getting what we deserve for our deeds. But he has done no harm." And he added, "Jesus, do not forget me when you come to reign." "I tell you truly," said Jesus, "you will be in paradise with me this very day."

By this time it was about twelve o'clock, and darkness covered the whole land till three o'clock, owing to an eclipse of the sun; the curtain in the middle of the temple was torn in two.

Then with a loud cry Jesus said, "Father, I trust my spirit to thy hands," and with these words he expired.¹

Concerning the manner of Jesus' execution, Dr. Klausner writes:

Crucifixion is the most terrible and cruel death which man has ever devised for taking vengeance on his fellow man. Cicero describes it as the most cruel and horrifying death, and Tacitus refers to it as a despicable death. It came from Persia where, apparently it arose out of the desire not to suffer the condemned victim to defile the earth, which was sacrosanct to Ahura Mazda (Ormuzd); thence it passed to Carthage and so to the Romans, who employed it as a pun-

¹ Luke 22:32-46 Moffatt.

ishment for rebels, renegade slaves and the lowest types of criminal . . . Scourging always preceded crucifixion: so Josephus twice informs us. This was a horrible punishment, reducing the naked body to strips of raw flesh, and inflamed and bleeding weals. And when afterwards the victim's hands were nailed to the crosspiece and his feet tied (or nailed) to the base of the beam, leaving the sufferer unable to drive away the gnats and flies which settled on his naked body and on his wounds, and unable to abstain from publicly fulfilling natural needs—nothing could have been more horrible and appalling. None but the Romans, whose cruelty surpassed that of ravening beasts, could have made choice of this revolting means of death.¹

Thus the most radiant and loving and daring of personalities, who knows himself to be the Son of God, is subjected to excruciating cruelty, on the charge that he is a menace to public security. Dullness, intolerance, greed, and fear have done their deadly work, and Jesus is dead at an age when most successful men are just beginning a career.² But he lives long enough to prove that a man may live every day as a good member of God's Home.

¹ *Op. cit.*, pp. 349, 350.

² Caiaphas' justification of the part he played has been phrased vividly by Kahlil Gibran: "In speaking of that man Jesus and of His death let us consider two salient facts: the Torah must needs be held in safety by us, and this kingdom must needs be protected by Rome. . . . And that man Jesus was a defiler and a corrupter. We slew Him with a conscience both deliberate and clean. And we shall slay all those who would debase the laws of Moses or seek to befoul our sacred heritage. We and Pontius Pilatus knew the danger in that man, and that it was wise to bring him to an end. I shall see that His followers come to the same end, and the echo of his word to the same silence. If Judea is to live all men who oppose her must be brought down to the dust. And ere Judea shall die I will cover my gray head with ashes even as did Samuel the prophet, and I will tear off this garment of Aaron and clothe me in sackcloth until I go hence for ever." The same writer interprets the attitude of Annas the High Priest as follows: "He was of the rabble, a brigand, a mountebank and a self-trumpeter. He appealed only to the unclean and the disinherited, and for this he had to go the way of all the tainted and the defiled. He made sport of us and of our laws; he mocked at our honor and jeered at our dignity. He even said he would destroy the temple and desecrate the holy places. He was shameless, and for this he had to die a shameful death." *Jesus, the Son of Man*, pp. 24, 25, 182. By permission of Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., publishers.

DAILY READINGS AND MEDITATIONS

SECOND DAY: STORM SIGNALS.

Mark 9:30-32; 10:32-34.

For Study and Meditation: How did Jesus know that doom was so near? Why were the disciples afraid to ask him just what he meant? On the way to Jerusalem, by what were the disciples amazed?

THIRD DAY: A FAREWELL CONVERSATION.

Mark 14:17-31.

For Study and Meditation: How did Jesus know that Judas was to betray him? What was the purpose of the ceremony at their last meal together? How do you account for Jesus' warning to Peter?

FOURTH DAY: MAKING A FINAL CHOICE.

Mark 14:32-52.

For Study and Meditation: What different factors combined to produce such intense agony? Why were the three disciples so unresponsive? What motivated Judas to betray his friend?

FIFTH DAY: IN THE HANDS OF HIS ENEMIES.

Mark 14:53-72.

For Study and Meditation: Why was it considered blasphemy for Jesus to say that he was the Messiah? Was such an admission a criminal offense? Vividly imagine yourself in Peter's shoes!

SIXTH DAY: THE SCALES OF JUSTICE BREAK DOWN.

Luke 23:1-25.

For Study and Meditation: What was Pilate's chief concern throughout the whole affair? Why did Jesus refuse to

answer Herod's questions? Why was the mob so insistent upon Jesus' death?

SEVENTH DAY: INNOCENCE DIES FOR GUILT.

Mark 15:21-39.

For Study and Meditation: What was the significance of the placard? What was the meaning of the cry of agony from the cross? Compare Luke 23:46.

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. List several instances of persecution of good men by the public authorities, historic and contemporary. Discuss briefly the reasons for their imprisonment or execution or other form of punishment.

2. Kagawa of Japan has twice been imprisoned as a dangerous "labor agitator" and Mahatma Gandhi has repeatedly been put behind prison bars as an enemy of the Empire. In what respects, if any, were the motivations of the Japanese and British governments comparable to those of the authorities who sent Jesus to the cross? What contrasts, if any, would you emphasize?

3. Why was Gene Debs sent to Atlanta penitentiary? Was the American Government more justified in imprisoning Debs than the Roman Governor was in executing Jesus? Give reasons for your answer.

4. Briefly state the cases for the Jewish and the Roman authorities.

5. Summarize your opinions as to why Jesus deliberately returned to the seat of danger?

6. What was the dilemma with which Jesus wrestled in the garden of Gethsemane?

7. Comment briefly upon the following statement: "In the struggle between guilt and innocence, if someone must die, it is better for the innocent to die than for them to kill the guilty." What light does the Cross of Calvary shed upon this problem?

SHORT BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. H. S. Coffin, *The Meaning of the Cross*, pp. 45-124.
2. *By an Unknown Disciple*, pp. 178-221.
3. J. A. Robertson, *The Spiritual Pilgrimage of Jesus*, pp. 237-284.
4. J. Middleton Murry: *Jesus, Man of Genius*, pp. 170-195; 346-364.
5. T. R. Glover, *The Jesus of History*, pp. 164-184.
6. Charles Gore, *Jesus of Nazareth*, pp. 128-174.
7. Basil Matthews, *A Life of Jesus*, pp. 408-478.
8. W. R. Bowie, *The Master*, pp. 262-306.
9. George A. Buttrick, *Jesus Came Preaching*, pp. 195-218.
10. Edward Grubb, *The Meaning of the Cross*, pp. 143-157.

(The books listed above may be purchased from Association Press.)

CHAPTER XII

THE RESURRECTION

Within a brief period after the tragedy of Calvary, occurs one of the mighty transformations of history. The disciples are utterly crushed when their Master is nailed to a tree, their ardent hopes being engulfed in apparently irretrievable disaster. Dispirited and disconsolate, they return to their homes in complete despair. Yet within a few short days, they are found boldly proclaiming redemption through the Crucified One. With unbounded courage, they denounce the authorities who have slain their Lord, and call for penitence and surrender. Peter, on successive occasions cries out:

"Men of Israel, hear these words: By the help of lawless men you nailed to the cross and murdered Jesus of Nazareth, a man accredited to you by God through the miracles, wonders, and signs which God performed by him among you, as you yourselves know. . . . Let the whole nation of Israel know beyond a doubt that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified both Lord and Messiah."

When they heard this they were conscience-stricken, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what are we to do?" . . .

"The God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob, the God of our forefathers, has honored Jesus his servant, whom you delivered up and disowned before Pilate when he had decided to release him. But you disowned the Holy and Just One and demanded the release of a murderer and put to death the Author of life . . . He is the stone despised by you builders that has become the chief corner-stone. And salvation comes by none other, for there is no other name under heaven revealed among men through which we can obtain salvation."

When they saw how bold Peter and John were and discovered that they were uncultured and uneducated men, they were astonished and recognized that they had been companions of Jesus.¹

¹ Acts 2:22, 23, 36, 37; 3:13, 14; 4:11-13. Kent.

Stephen, upon being arrested and brought before the High Priests, turns upon his accusers with astounding boldness:

"O! stubborn race, heathen in heart and ears, you are forever resisting the Holy Spirit; your ancestors did it, and you are doing it still. Which of the Prophets escaped persecution at their hands? They killed those who foretold the coming of the Righteous One; of whom you, in your turn, have now become the betrayers and murderers—you who received the Law as transmitted by angels and yet failed to keep it."

As they listened to this, the Council grew frantic with rage, and gnashed their teeth at Stephen . . . At this, with a loud shout, they stopped their ears and all rushed upon him, forced him outside the city, and began to stone him, the witnesses laying their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. And they stoned Stephen, while he cried to the Lord: "Lord Jesus! receive my spirit!" Falling on his knees, he called out loudly:

"Lord! do not charge them with this sin;" and with these words he fell asleep.

Saul approved of his being put to death.

On that very day a great persecution broke out against the Church which was in Jerusalem; and its members, with the exception of the Apostles, were all scattered over the districts of Judaea and Samaria. Some religious men buried Stephen, with loud lamentations for him. But Saul began to devastate the Church; he entered house after house, dragged out men and women alike, and threw them into prison.¹

How may we explain the transformation of the forlorn and dejected followers, whose hopes had been wrecked by Calvary, into the courageous and joyous messengers of a new way of life? The evidence is inescapable. That Jesus has been raised from the dead and is now alive is the passionate conviction which revolutionizes the attitudes of the disciples.

Just what happened is uncertain, as the four Gospel records differ in numerous respects. The central fact which is emphasized by all the writers is the intense belief of the

¹ Acts 7:57-8:3 Twentieth Century.

disciples that they have seen and talked with Jesus since his crucifixion. "It should not surprise us," writes Dr. Warschauer, "to find the Gospel narratives of what happened after the death of Jesus in a state of bewildering confusion, disjointedness, and mutual contradiction. For those from whom the most primitive accounts of these events are derived, the days immediately following the Passion were days of extreme perturbation and nervous strain—circumstances unfavorable to clearness either of impression or recollection; and between those events and the composition of our earliest Gospel more than a generation had elapsed, more than enough for oblivion and imagination to play their respective parts in giving rise to all kinds of variants. To expect coherence or consistency in stories which had originated and circulated under such conditions would be unreasonable."¹

From the varying details in the various records, Dr. Warschauer has assembled the following:

While *Mark* expressly names as the discoverers of the tenantless grave three women, viz., Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome, *Matthew* names two, viz., Mary Magdalene and "the other Mary"; *Luke* names three, viz., Mary Magdalene, Joana, Mary the mother of James, "and the other women with them"; while the *Fourth Gospel* mentions only Mary Magdalene.

When the discoverers, or discoverer, come to the tomb, they find the stone, according to *Mark*, *Luke*, and the *Fourth Evangelist*, already taken away; in *Matthew's* narrative the stone is still there, and is rolled away before the women's eyes by an angel who descends from heaven, while the Roman soldiers are paralysed with fright.

If we ask the women's object in making this early excursion, *Mark* and *Luke* tell us that they desired to anoint the Master's body, *Matthew* that they went to see the sepulchre, while the *Fourth Gospel*, where we read it explicitly stated that the body was already anointed, mentions no object at all, but leaves us to make the not very difficult guess why a devoted adherent should wish to visit the grave which had received the remains of the beloved Teacher.

¹J. Warschauer, *The Historical Life of Christ*, pp. 341, 342. By permission of The Macmillan Company, publishers.

As the visitors, or visitor, drew nearer to the place of burial, they saw, according to *Mark*, a young man in white, sitting inside the tomb; according to *Matthew*, an angel, outside the tomb; according to *Luke*, two men inside; according to the *Fourth Gospel*, Mary Magdalene sees two angels sitting, one at the head and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.

In *Mark* and *Matthew* the women receive a message from the young man, or angel, bidding them tell the disciples—*Mark* adds, “and Peter”—that Jesus is going before them into Galilee, and that there they shall see Him; in *Luke* they receive no such message, nor does Mary Magdalene in the *Fourth Gospel*, while the disciples, according to the Third and Fourth Evangelists, remain in Jerusalem, and see Jesus there.

As for this message, according to *Mark* it remained undelivered, for the women, we are told, said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid; in *Matthew*, on the contrary, we read that the women “departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring His disciples word,” the implication being, of course, that the latter were still in or near the capital; in *Luke*, where the women have received no special message to the disciples, they nevertheless at once report to them what they have seen and heard, viz., the empty tomb, and the announcement made to them by the two men who had told them that Jesus was risen from the dead, in accordance with His own prediction; while in the *Fourth Gospel* Mary Magdalene, having seen the stone taken away from the tomb, informs, not the Eleven, but Peter and the unnamed disciple.

In *Mark* and *Luke* no appearance of the Risen Saviour to the women is chronicled; in *Matthew* Jesus meets them as they return from the sepulchre, and confirms the angel’s message; in the *Fourth Gospel* He appears to the weeping Mary Magdalene alone.

In *Matthew* the women take hold of the Lord’s feet; in the *Fourth Gospel* He bids Mary Magdalene not to touch Him, because He was not yet ascended.

Mark and *Matthew* have nothing to say of any verification of the women’s discovery by the disciples; in the *Fourth Gospel* however, Peter and the unnamed disciple run to the tomb, and vie with each other who shall arrive there

first—the nameless one winning in the strange contest, but not entering the tomb, while Peter, who arrives second, enters; in *Luke*, finally, Peter goes to the tomb alone, while later in the same Gospel we read a more general statement, according to which “certain that were with us went to the tomb and found it even so as the women had said.” The earliest tradition, therefore, does not make Peter a witness, and in fact states that he was not told of the discovery of the empty grave, the women being too frightened to speak. Nor, when we have compared the Gospel narratives of the finding of the empty tomb with one another, are we at the end of our long list of divergences between our witnesses, for the later Evangelists report alleged appearances of the Risen Lord’s which were unknown to the more primitive tradition.¹

The various accounts do not agree concerning the bodily nature of Jesus after his resurrection. Sometimes he is described as possessing a normal body, while in other passages he seems to be a spirit who comes and goes at will, as for instance: “And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight. . . .² But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they beheld a spirit. . . .³ She turned herself back, and beholdeth Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. . . . She, supposing him to be the gardener. . . .⁴ Though the doors were closed, Jesus entered and stood among them. . . .⁵ But when day was now breaking, Jesus stood on the beach: yet the disciples knew not that it was Jesus. . . .⁶ And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he parted from them, and was carried up into heaven. . . .⁷ As they were looking, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.”⁸

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 346, 347.

² Luke 24:31.

³ Luke 24:37.

⁴ John 20:14, 15.

⁵ John 20:26.

⁶ John 21:4.

⁷ Luke 24:51.

⁸ Acts 1:9

Concerning the nature of the resurrection, J. Middleton Murry writes:

But the only impregnable doctrine is history. To history belongs the reality of Simon's experience of the continued existence of Jesus. It was real and it was decisive; as Paul's also was real and decisive. Paul's is the earliest evidence we have for the Resurrection; and Paul's language in the fifteenth chapter of Corinthians shows that he considered Peter's vision to have been of precisely the same kind as his own, and further that he himself did not believe in a resurrection of the physical body ("Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God"), but in a resurrection into a spiritual body. And, since Paul received his doctrine from Peter, we need not doubt that Paul's conviction was Peter's own.

The conviction of the continued life of Jesus in a "spiritual body," reached first by Simon Peter in Galilee, is the reality behind the conflicting and mutually destructive stories of the bodily resurrection of Jesus. Of the reality of this conviction, of the reality of the experience that created this conviction, we cannot doubt. The great Christian Church was built not on a lie, but on a truth. Nor can we doubt that this experience of Peter, like the later experience of Paul, was the experience of an objective presence. Peter was not the victim of an hallucination, nor Paul the dupe of an illusion. That our intellects cannot conceive the nature of an objective presence which is not physical, or that a "spiritual body" remains for our minds a contradiction in terms, is only evidence that our minds are still inadequate to reality.¹

However much divergence in detail may be found in the records, there is entire agreement concerning the intensity of the disciples' belief that Jesus has burst the bonds of death and is alive. We are not able to know precisely how they have acquired this faith, but it is stupid to say that the whole story is a fabrication. It is conceivable that the disciples are mistaken, but not that they are deliberately perpetrating a gigantic fraud. Men do not gain joy indescribable and peace that passes understanding, even in the midst of turmoil and

¹ *Op. cit.*, pp. 370, 371.

danger, from conscious deception. They do not triumphantly suffer martyrdom for a lie, and they are not able by reliance upon deceit to comfort the bereaved, lift the fallen, and preach wonderful words of life. Those persons who would have us believe that the disciples are guilty of falsehood and deception, are asking us to fly in the face of all the evidence, psychological and historical. Mighty streams of blessings for mankind do not emerge from springs of lies.

"Peter's confidence," writes Professor Case, "that he had seen Jesus alive again after the crucifixion is one of the best-attested facts of ancient history. In whatever way the experience is to be explained, in accordance with the demands of present-day thinking, the sincerity of Peter's conviction is not open to question. Similarly, Paul had no doubt regarding the genuineness of Jesus' appearances on at least six different occasions."¹

Concerning this point, Dr. Glover has written: "Great results have great causes. We have to find, somewhere or other, between the crucifixion and the first preaching of the disciples in Jerusalem, something that entirely changed the character of that group of men. Something happened, so tremendous and so vital, that it changed not only the character of the movement and the men—but with them the whole history of the world. The evidence for the resurrection is not so much what we read in the Gospels as what we find in the rest of the New Testament—the new life of the disciples. They are a new group. When it came to the cross, his cross, they ran away. A few weeks later we find them rejoicing to be beaten, imprisoned and put to death (Acts v. 41). What had happened? What we have to explain is a new life—a new life of prayer and joy and power, a new indifference to physical death, in a new relation to God. That is one outcome of the cross and of what followed; and as historians we have to explain it. We have also to explain how the disciples came to conceive of another Galilean—a carpenter whom they might have seen sawing

¹S. J. Case, *Jesus Through the Centuries*, pp. 38, 39. University of Chicago Press, publishers.

and sweating in his shop, with whom they tramped the roads of Palestine, whom they saw done to death in ignominy and derision—sitting at the right hand of God.”¹

If a man approaches the Gospel records with his mind fully made up that life after death is impossible, he is naturally obliged to take the position that the disciples were mistaken or that they were guilty of deception. If, however, he avoids the dogmatic assertion that resurrection from the grave is impossible, the testimony of the records is extremely impressive, and, to me, fully convincing. Concerning this point, Bishop Gore has written:

If a man is able to admit the possibility of resurrection from the dead as a phase in the evolution of human life, and further is impressed with the sense of reality about the records of the life of Jesus down to the Crucifixion, it is surely the case that he must find these stories of the appearances of the risen Jesus to his intimate friends in a high degree self-evidencing and convincing. There is no realm in which the mere imagination of men would have been more likely to produce vulgar and “cheap” results than in the construction of stories of the reappearances of Jesus. But this story of the walk to Emmaus, or of Peter and John’s visit to the tomb, or of the recovery of the faith of Thomas! or that of the Apostles again turned to fisherman on the Lake of Galilee, and of Peter’s restoration to his old office! Can one find any justification in the literature of the first century, let alone the literature of Palestine, for supposing that there could have been any individual whose imagination was capable of constructing such stories? or is it reasonable to suppose that the myth-making faculty could have done any such work in the mind of any group or crowd?²

¹T. R. Glover, *The Jesus of History*, pp. 177, 178. Association Press.

²*Jesus of Nazareth*, pp. 222, 223. By permission of Henry Holt & Company, publishers.

DAILY READINGS AND MEDITATIONS

SECOND DAY: LIGHT THROUGH THE DARKNESS.

Mark 15:38-16:8.

For Study and Meditation: Where were the disciples at this time? Why? Why had the two women come to the tomb?

THIRD DAY: ON THE WAY TO EMMAUS.

Luke 24:13-32.

For Study and Meditation: Why was Jesus unrecognized? How do you interpret this passage?

FOURTH DAY: IN JERUSALEM.

Luke 24:33-53.

For Study and Meditation: Why did the disciples think Jesus was a spirit? Why did they return to the temple?

FIFTH DAY: THE ASCENSION.

Acts 1:1-11.

For Study and Meditation: Just what do you think happened? How do you interpret the ascension?

SIXTH DAY: THE TESTIMONY OF PAUL.

1 Cor. 15:1-26.

For Study and Meditation: Did Paul regard his vision of Jesus as being of the same character as Jesus' other appearances?

SEVENTH DAY: WHEREFORE, BE STEDFAST!

1 Cor. 15:35-57.

For Study and Meditation: What practical difference did belief in immortality make to the early disciples?

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. List the most appealing arguments in favor of personal immortality. State the strongest arguments to the contrary.
2. On what grounds did Jesus believe in life after death?
3. If Jesus' concept of God is valid, is belief in immortality reasonable? If so, why? If not, why not?
4. Does modern science invalidate Jesus' concept of God? If so, why? If not, why not?
5. To what degree can immortality be proved or disproved by science?
6. Is bodily resurrection essential to immortality? Give reasons for your answer.
7. How do you account for the passionate conviction of the early Christians that Jesus had risen from the grave?
8. Does it seem reasonable to you that Jesus was annihilated by death and ceased to exist, except in the memory of his friends? Give reasons for your answer.

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2. Charles Gore, *Jesus of Nazareth*, pp. 212-253.
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(The books listed above may be purchased from Association Press.)

CHAPTER XIII

WHAT HE EXPECTS OF HIS FRIENDS

Undivided allegiance to the task of establishing God's Home is what Jesus expects of his friends. The purpose of life is to participate in the endeavor to awaken men to a realization of their kinship to God and to each other, and to persuade them to live every day as if the ideal society has already been created. All other objectives must be subordinated to the supreme goal, and the consequent risks and penalties must joyously be accepted.

An exquisite parable makes Jesus' meaning clear: "The Kingdom of the Heavens is like a jewel merchant who is in quest of choice pearls. He finds one most costly pearl; he goes away; and though it costs all he has, he buys it."¹ And again: "The Kingdom of the Heavens is like treasure buried in the open country, which a man finds, but buries again, and, in his joy about it, goes and sells all he has and buys that piece of ground."²

Illustrations of his teaching concerning the quality of devotion expected are easily assembled:

But make His Kingdom and righteousness your chief aim, and then these things shall all be given you in addition.³

Come, follow me, and I will make you fish for men.⁴

And as he was passing along he saw Levi, the son of Alphaeus, sitting at the tollhouse, and he said to him,

"Follow me."

And he got up and followed him.⁵

Not every one who says to me "Master! Master!" will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in Heaven.⁶

"*You* are the salt of the earth; but if salt has become tasteless, in what way can it regain its saltiness? It is no longer

¹ Matt. 13:45, 46 Weymouth.

² Matt. 13:44 Weymouth.

³ Matt. 6:33 Weymouth.

⁴ Mark 1:17 Goodspeed.

⁵ Mark 2:14 Goodspeed.

⁶ Matt. 7:21 Twentieth Century.

good for anything but to be thrown away and trodden on by the passers by. *You* are the light of the world; a town cannot be hid if built on a hill-top. Nor is a lamp lighted to be put under a bushel, but on a lampstand; and then it gives light to all in the house. Just so let your light shine before all men, in order that they may see your holy lives and may give glory to your Father who is in Heaven.”¹

Again and again Jesus emphasizes the fact that he is not calling men to a conventional mode of life. From those who have been granted vision and privilege, much is expected. Sonship and brotherhood impose tremendous responsibilities.

For I assure you that unless your righteousness greatly surpasses that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you will certainly not find entrance into the Kingdom of the Heavens . . . For if you love only those who love you, what reward have you earned? Do not even the tax-gatherers do that? And if you salute only your near relatives, what praise is due to you? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? You, however, are to be complete in goodness, as your Heavenly Father is complete in goodness, as your Heavenly Father is complete.²

But if your right eye makes you fall, tear it out and throw it away, for you might better lose one part of your body than have it all thrown into the pit! If your right hand makes you fall, cut it off and throw it away! For you might better lose one part of your body than have it all go down to the pit!³

And Jesus looked at him and loved him, and he said to him, “There is one thing that you lack. Go, sell all you have, and give the money to the poor, and then you will have riches in heaven; and come back and be a follower of mine.”

But his face fell at Jesus’ words, and he went away much cast down, for he had a great deal of property.⁴

And as they journeyed along the road a man said to him, “I will follow you anywhere.” Jesus said to him,

“The foxes have their holes, the wild birds have their nests,

¹ Matt. 5:13-16 Weymouth.

² Matt. 5:20, 46-48 Weymouth.

³ Matt. 5:29, 30 Goodspeed.

⁴ Mark 10:21, 22 Goodspeed.

but the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head." He said to another man, "Follow me"; but he said, "Let me go and bury my father first of all." Jesus said to him, "Leave the dead to bury their own dead; you go and spread the news of the Reign of God."¹

He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me;

He who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me;

He who will not take his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me.²

Jesus takes it for granted that his friends will suffer persecution and encounter numerous perils. Repeatedly he warns them not to be afraid, but boldly to live day by day as if the ideal society is a present reality.

Blessed are you when they have insulted and persecuted you, and have said every cruel thing about you falsely for my sake. Be joyful and triumphant, because your reward is great in the Heavens; for so were the Prophets before you persecuted.³

Brother will give up brother to be put to death, and the father his child, and children will turn against their parents and have them put to death. You will be hated by everyone, because you bear my name.⁴

Now, go. Remember, I am sending you out as my Messengers like lambs among wolves.⁵

Jesus not only foresees his own doom, but also tells his disciples plainly that they too will be martyred. Many crosses will be required before the Family of God can be fully established. Suffering is inescapable for those who bear the burdens of their kinsmen.⁶

¹ Luke 9:57-60 Moffatt.

² Matt. 10:37, 38 Moffatt.

³ Matt. 5:11, 12 Weymouth.

⁴ Mark 13:12, 13 Goodspeed.

⁵ Luke 10:3 Twentieth Century.

⁶ Compare John 16:2: "They will exclude you from their synagogues; why, the time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is doing religious service to God."—Goodspeed's translation.

A pupil is not better than his teacher, nor a slave better than his master. A pupil should be satisfied to come to be like his teacher, or a slave to come to be like his master. If men have called the head of the house Beelzebub, how much worse names will they give to the members of his household! So do not be afraid of them. For there is nothing covered up that is not going to be uncovered, nor secret that is not going to be known. What I tell you in the dark you must say in the light, and what you hear whispered in your ear, you must proclaim from the house-tops. Have no fear of those who kill the body, but cannot kill the soul.¹

If any man wishes to walk in my steps, let him renounce self, take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, and whoever, for my sake and for the sake of the Good News, will lose his life shall save it.²

¹ Matt. 10:24-28 Goodspeed.

² Mark 8:34, 36 Twentieth Century.

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DAILY READINGS AND MEDITATIONS

SECOND DAY: FAITHFULNESS REQUIRED.

Luke 19:12-26.

For Study and Meditation: In what sense is it true that "from him that hath not, even that which he hath shall be taken away from him?" Is this just?

THIRD DAY: ALERTNESS DEMANDED.

Matt. 24:42-25:13.

For Study and Meditation: Is this applicable in a situation except where a belief prevails that the world will soon come to an end? Why?

FOURTH DAY: SENDING OUT THE SEVENTY.

Luke 10:1-24.

For Study and Meditation: For what purpose were the seventy sent forth? Why were they to anticipate persecution?

FIFTH DAY: EVIDENCE THAT JESUS' WARNINGS WERE JUSTIFIED.

Acts 12:1-3; 16:16-24; 21:30-36.

For Study and Meditation: What were the reasons for King Herod's ruthlessness? In the second incident, why did the crowd join in the persecution? Why was the mob so desirous of killing Paul?

SIXTH DAY: PAUL RECOUNTS HIS ORDEALS.

2 Cor. 11:23-12:10.

For Study and Meditation: What was Paul's reason for drawing up this list of his sufferings? What was his inner dynamic?

SEVENTH DAY: THE ROLL CALL OF MARTYRS.

Heb. 11:32-12:2.

For Study and Meditation: In what way do you account for the frequency of martyrdom? Are fewer martyrs or more martyrs needed today?

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Does a nation, when in wartime it conscripts soldiers for military duty, make heavier demands upon its citizens than Jesus made upon his disciples? Discuss this point briefly.

2. Why is it "practicable" for citizens to die with bayonets in their hands, and "impracticable" for prophets and seers to go to their doom rather than forsake their ideals? Be realistic in your answer.

3. How exacting are the requirements of membership in the Communist Party of Soviet Russia? Give details.

4. Was Jesus "reasonable" in demanding subordination of personal comfort and safety to the task of creating the new society?

5. Did Simon Peter live a "practicable" life? As he was lying in a Roman prison awaiting execution, could Paul legitimately regard his career as "successful"? Give reasons.

6. To what degree is it true to say that the blood of the martyrs has been responsible for social progress? Give examples.

7. In the light of the foregoing, discuss briefly the statement: "The *purpose* of life is to help build the Family of God; the *method* is to live daily as a good member of God's Home, run the risks and accept the consequences of following Jesus' way of life."

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(The books listed above may be purchased from Association Press.)

CHAPTER XIV

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF JESUS FOR TODAY

FIRST DAY

What can Jesus do for this generation? Why should baffled, harassed and defeated individuals in this age turn to him? What contribution can a peasant carpenter of first century Galilee make toward the solution of highly complex industrial problems in a machine civilization? What light can be thrown on the question of war and peace among modern nations, embracing hundreds of millions of citizens, by a crucified victim of Imperial Rome?

In the first place, Jesus gives us our clearest and deepest insight into the nature of God. Whether or not there is a God makes an immense difference to individuals and to society. Almost equally significant are the qualities and characteristics of God if he exists at all. If at the center of the universe is to be found only omnipotent force rolling relentlessly on, oblivious of and indifferent to human values, the struggle for nobility of character and the crusade for an equitable society possess no universal or cosmic significance. Whereas, if there exists an Eternal Entity, with infinite knowledge and boundless affection for human beings, who strives ceaselessly to create a harmonious community of perfected individuals, life takes on an utterly different meaning. Man is then undergirded and upheld by powers, not his own, working for righteousness.

At this point Jesus possesses double significance. His own personality reveals the barest minimum that can be attributed to God, and his teaching concerning God in turn clothes with imperishable meaning his own attitudes and practices.

Personality at its peak is the highest value in the universe. The capacity for knowledge, affection, and purposive action must characterize the controlling forces of the universe, unless the created is to be considered more significant than

the creator. Rational thought demands the conviction that, if there be a God at all, he is at least as wise and loving and sacrificial as Jesus. He must far transcend in quality and achievement the noblest product of his creation. "I will not believe," writes the great scientist, Sir Oliver Lodge, "that it is given to man to have thoughts, higher and nobler than the real truth of things." The conclusion is inescapable, therefore, that God must dwell on a higher level than is revealed by Jesus dying on the cross, itself the utmost pinnacle of human accomplishment.

The totality of Jesus' teaching about God portrays him as redemptive love. With an affection transcending human comprehension, God seeks to save individuals from low aim and unworthy conduct, and to release in them limitless potentialities for nobility of life. The vehicle chosen by Jesus to convey his concept of God is not that of abstract thought or philosophical speculation. He chooses rather the most pulsating of all symbols: parenthood. God is a heavenly Father, far surpassing any earthly parent in tenderness, solicitude, and vicarious suffering.

"It was the teaching of Jesus," writes Professor Baillie, "that God in his dealings with us eternally is that Redemptive Love which he himself tried to shew forth in his dealing with the few men around him during the few years of his ministry. And it is this, certainly, which is the deepest meaning of the doctrine of atonement—not the love of Christ for the people of Galilee in the brief days of his sojourning with them, nor the love that we ought to have for our brothers to-day, but the love which our Heavenly Father eternally has for us who are his sons. . . . It was the goodness returned for their evil that won the lost sheep. It was the miracle of forgiveness that had in it the virtue to redeem. It was love's power of drowning his past that gave the sinner heart for the future. Here we found the secret of our Lord's life; and then we saw how it is also the secret which he has given us for the conduct of our own lives; but now we see that it is far more than either—that it is the secret

of the structure of the spiritual universe, the secret of the nature of God.”¹

If Jesus' concept is valid, we are here confronted with the most stupendous and glorious fact imaginable. One natural consequence of such a conviction is outlined by Mr. Nathaniel Micklem in these words: “It is probably no exaggeration to say that half our illnesses would never come, and half the burden of the rest would be taken away, if we were able to realise that we are children in a Father's house, that we are not forsaken, nor is God angry with us, but is speaking to us and commending his great love to us even through our trouble, if only we will listen to his voice.”² Nothing could conceivably be more significant than to have a Divine personality, with infinite wisdom, immeasurable love, endless forgiveness, tireless zeal, and sacrificial devotion, dominant throughout the universe.

It is in this world of reality that Jesus constantly dwells. Ever conscious that he is in his Father's house, he seeks intimate and yet more intimate companionship with God. Moreover, to an unequalled degree he trusts God. “It is impossible to judge rightly of Jesus' moral teaching,” writes Professor Scott, “unless we keep in mind this attitude of trust in God which it always pre-supposes. This, indeed, may be singled out as the distinguishing mark of the Gospel morality. The pagan ethical systems, from Aristotle onward, assumed that the world we live in is hostile or indifferent. Our task is to cultivate qualities by which we may be able to circumvent or overcome the opposing forces. Modern ethical teaching is determined, in great measure, by the same outlook. It starts from the conception of a struggle for existence. Placed as we are in the midst of powers which are ever ready to destroy us we have to match our will against them and compel them, in spite of themselves, to further our higher life. For Jesus the world, with all its dangers and accidents, is overruled by God, who is ever mindful of his

¹ John Baillie, *The Place of Jesus Christ in Modern Christianity*, pp. 172-174. By permission of Charles Scribner's Sons, publishers.

² *The Galilean*, pp. 42, 43. James Clarke & Co. Ltd., London.

people and is waiting to help them. Our part is to discern the sovereign will at work and reconcile ourselves to its behests. If we do so we shall find that the things which seemed most contrary are on our side, and are offered by God as means to our welfare. It is this trust in God which makes the moral task, as Jesus conceives it, one of freedom and joy. Morality for most men carries with it the idea of a painful discipline, salutary in the end, but imposed on us meanwhile against our will. But in the mind of Jesus there is always the thought of a divine power working along with us. The world is not an enemy that we must be afraid of and can only hope to master by the exercise of our own strength and cunning. It is God's world, and while obeying him we can have the confidence that all things will work together for our good."¹

This combination of the personality of Jesus, his teaching concerning God, and his reliance upon God, offers the most illuminating of all clues as to the nature of the universe. If the cosmic processes are indifferent or hostile to man's aspirations, then the fairest flower of the human race emerges from a mocking illusion, while his teaching becomes a meaningless jumble of insane exhortations. If, on the other hand, a loving Father is at the helm, Jesus becomes the most discerning of men, and his way of life constitutes man's hope of redemption in this world and in the ages to come.

For Study and Meditation: Is my life being built every day on the assumption that the universe is dominated by Eternal and Infinite Wisdom, Love, and Purposive Activity? If not, why not?

SECOND DAY

Another inestimable contribution of Jesus to this generation is found in his realistic estimate of human nature. Never blind to the actual and latent weaknesses and brutalities in human beings, he nevertheless acts upon the conviction that human nature is potentially God's nature, therefore pos-

¹ E. F. Scott, *The Ethical Teaching of Jesus*, pp. 69, 70. By permission of The Macmillan Company, publishers.

sessing boundless possibilities of nobility. The present generation, for the most part, constantly proceeds upon a contrary assumption. Capitalism considers the appeal to greed essential to the effective operation of the processes of production and distribution. Nationalism arms to the teeth because it assumes that other peoples can be restrained only by threats or by the actual use of violence. Capital punishment rests upon the theory that fear is the great deterrent to crime. Racial discrimination results from the refusal to recognize inherent nobility in all men.

In three ways Jesus stands ready to help this generation raise its estimate of man's significance: by his own achievements, by his teaching concerning human nature, and by his attitudes toward his fellows.

The heights to which mankind may climb are convincingly revealed by Jesus. After living in the presence of his matchless character, it is impossible to conclude that human nature is inherently selfish and anti-social, and that greed and cruelty must necessarily triumph. That compassion, zeal, and sacrifice for others are normal and natural qualities in human beings is easy to believe when one is near the Carpenter of Galilee. He has broken a new trail, and men of this age may follow in his steps. Or, to use Dr. Glover's language: "The discovery of the volume of life, which comes from Jesus Christ, is one of the greatest that men have made. Merely to have dipped his bucket, as it were, in that great stream of life has again and again meant everything to a man."¹

The grandeur of human personality is enhanced also by the teaching of Jesus. Man is a son of God, created in the image of the Father. This concept, of course, was not original with Jesus. But he gave it fresh and deeper meanings. God is not only Father of the nation, concerned about masses in general. He has particular knowledge of the individual and boundless solicitude for his welfare. The Father meets the prodigal more than half-way, and rejoices when the lost is found.

¹ T. R. Glover, *The Jesus of History*, p. 208. Association Press.

In our own time, when millions of workers are regarded as cogs in a giant machine and when multitudes of soldiers are mowed down as cannon-fodder, we desperately need to recover the vision of human personality as possessing inestimable value in itself and destined to grow into the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. Modern science, with its emphasis upon the immensity of the stellar spaces and the inexorable operation of cosmic laws, and modern social organization, with its tendency to subordinate the individual to the mass, tend to obscure the essential dignity of human personality.

"To every man," writes President Coffin, "come times when he is oppressed with his own Lilliputian insignificance—one among such swarming myriads of his kind, an ephemeral being whose span of life is a mere wink in the duration of our ancient planet, a dweller upon one of the meaner bodies in a system of innumerable stars, a walking chemical laboratory driven by instincts of hunger and sex. But if one believes himself redeemed by the blood of Christ, he cannot hold himself cheap."¹ The sight of the Prince of Men agonizing over the sins of his fellows and suffering martyrdom at their hands, enormously strengthens one's belief in the potential godlikeness of human nature.

Moreover, the enhanced value attached to human beings because of their kinship to God, together with the challenge inherent in Jesus' compassionate sacrifice for them, awakens and intensifies our determination to be effective servants of our fellows. John Woolman, the Quaker who did most to awaken America to the evils of slavery, once wrote: "I saw a mass of matter of a dull gloomy colour, and was informed that this mass was human beings in as great misery as they could be, and live, and that I was mixed with them, and that henceforth I might not consider myself a distinct or separate being. In this state I remained several hours." Elsewhere he prays: "O Lord my God! the amazing horrors of darkness were gathered around me and covered me all over, and

¹ H. S. Coffin, *The Meaning of the Cross*, p. 106. By permission of Charles Scribner's Sons, publishers.

I saw no way to go forth. I felt the depth and extent of the misery of my fellow-creatures, separated from the Divine harmony, and it was heavier than I could bear, and I was crushed down under it. I lifted my hand, I stretched out my arm, but there was none to help me; I looked round about and was amazed."¹

In another way also Jesus raises our estimate of personality. He proves to men that they are capable of ascending the heights by inspiring and trusting them. Zacchaeus is a new man after responding to Jesus' challenge. The out-cast woman recovers self-respect from him and changes her manner of life. Simon the Wobbler becomes Peter the Rock. In every generation men have demonstrated the validity of Jesus' faith in human nature by responding to his challenge and reproducing his way of life.

For Study and Meditation: Wherever I see men and women—in office and shop, on the street, in places of amusement, in prison—do I recognize in them children of God with illimitable possibilities of nobility? If not, why not?

THIRD DAY

A high and consuming purpose in life is sorely needed by men of this age. To individuals who are floating aimlessly with the stream, or who have been washed into a stagnant pool, Jesus offers an invigorating program of action. If God is a sacrificially redemptive Father, and if all human beings are beloved kinsmen, then the supreme purpose of life is to seek the establishment of God's Home, and the effective method is by dwelling in filial relations with God and in brotherly relations with men, thus hastening the coming of the ideal society.

To seek ease and luxury and special privilege in a world where multitudes are destitute and stricken is utterly alien to Jesus' way of life. When viewed through his eyes, the present-day mad scramble for personal possessions and power

¹ Quoted by Edward Grubb, *Christianity as Life*, p. 63.

seems imbecile and wholly unworthy. To measure life in terms of the abundance of things possessed, and to exhaust one's energies in tireless pursuit of gold is to forfeit higher values.

This generation is caught in the relentless coils of externalism. Outside stimuli of an endless variety are sought, and pleasure is measured by the intensity of thrills and sensations. "We men of this present age," writes Dr. Rittelmeyer, "permit ourselves to expend our whole strength on external things. The life outside us draws us incessantly away from the life within us. . . . Our life is a ceaseless round of strain and diversion in eternal alteration. Our serious occupations are all with the external, and there we seek, also, our recreations. Men to-day are able to leave home and do astonishingly much, but they are not able to live upon their inner resources. . . . The wealth and variety of the things we know and can do is out of all proportion to the poverty of spirit that stares us in the face when we are left alone. We have all gone astray and lost our way in things material—the scholar in his investigations, the politician in his campaigns, the merchant in his business. The challenge to which our age has responded is the conquest of the outer world; this is its badge of destruction, and it is its misfortune as well."¹

The external stimuli which prompt Jesus to action are the sight of human misery, exhibitions of callousness and cruelty, evidence of hypocrisy and barrenness of spirit. He is never at the mercy of cravings for comforts, luxuries, privileges. "The life of no other person known to history," writes Dr. Rittelmeyer, "appears to flow so entirely from an inward impetus, to be so basically under the control of an internal necessity, as does the life of Jesus. . . . Nothing external left any mark on Him, but the whole external world has come to bear the imprint more and more of the quality of His inner life. . . . His is a life that bubbled up copiously from unknown inward deeps. Whenever it meets with ob-

¹ Friedrich Rittelmeyer, *Behold the Man*, pp. 147, 148. By permission of The Macmillan Company, publishers.

stacles, this life simply streams by them or cuts a channel for itself through them. It is not checked nor diverted from its course. The impetus of its power never seems to ebb. How conspicuous is the lack of outward stimulus in the life of Jesus!"¹

The primary purpose of life is not to seek things, but to discover pathways leading to a deeper fellowship with God and a more joyous comradeship with men in building the new society. Enforced poverty in an urban civilization is devastating to human values, and constitutes a scourge which must be banished. But the voluntary subordination of personal comfort and safety to the supreme endeavor to find God and share with man is liberating and ennobling. From the bondage of things, men of our time need deliverance. "When Jesus bade the rich young ruler sell his possessions and give them away," writes Dr. Richard Roberts, "he was not putting his good faith to the proof. He meant what he said literally, for he saw that the youth could make little headway in the pursuit of eternal life while he was carrying so much heavy baggage. The rich may enter the kingdom of heaven, but only with difficulty. It is of the nature of a miracle if they get there. Their riches stand in the way. St. Francis was essentially right when he preached the doctrine of poverty to his followers. The task of attaining eternal life requires so much of a man's attention that he simply cannot afford the distracting care of property. Nor can he without courting failure spread his life out over too many things. There is a broad road, says Jesus, that leads to destruction; it is a narrow way that leads to life. When Jesus uses the words *broad* and *narrow* he does not mean them to be taken merely as synonyms for *vicious* and *virtuous*. He is simply warning men against spreading out life too thin and calling them to concentration. There is a narrowness which is death; there is no less a narrowness which is life. We may spend life to excess even upon things in themselves legitimate and even good; and if such priceless things as a

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 47, 48.

hand or an eye stand in the way of our quest of life, we do well to get rid of them rather than to miss life altogether. In a word, the life to which Jesus calls us cannot be realised without a rigorous simplicity of habit."¹

Jesus warns us against a comfort-and-privilege-seeking existence, and challenges us to make religion—love toward God and man—our paramount and ceaseless concern.

For Study and Meditation: Which do I actually rate higher: comfort and luxury, or communion and friendship? How valid is my scale of values?

FOURTH DAY

Jesus offers to our generation an *ideal* for society and a *method* of achieving harmonious relations among individuals, classes, nations, and races. Half of our most baffling social problems would quickly disappear, and the other half would become much easier of solution, if men acted on the assumption that, as sons of one Father, they are kinsmen and therefore bound by family ties.

Nationalism assumes that the peoples of another country are in a different category and on a lower level than its own citizens. The people of the United States are therefore much more incensed when a New Yorker is killed in Mexico, than when a Mexican is mobbed in Texas. Starving Chinese arouse comparatively little sympathy or pity in foreign lands. In wartime, the enemy's casualty lists are greeted with boisterous and indecent applause.

Racialism is unconsciously or callously cruel. Nordics catch only the faintest glimmer of understanding of the terrible misery produced by discrimination, segregation, and exploitation. The refusal to consider members of other races as part of God's family circle, and to look upon them as worthy of respect and consideration, constitutes one of the most damning and devastating facts of our modern world.

¹ *The Untried Door*, pp. 45, 46. By permission of The Womans Press, publishers.

Capitalism, by eulogizing greed and competition, and by bestowing its choicest awards upon the victors in the universal scramble for things, obscures the brotherhood of man. No shame is attached to a rich investor who lives in luxurious idleness from the labor of poverty-stricken masses.

The walls of partition which shut out from each other members of various classes, nations and races would come toppling down if Jesus' experience of God became widespread, and if men took seriously his gospel of universal kinship. "If we were asked which was the greatest miracle recorded of Jesus of Nazareth," writes Nathaniel Micklem, "well might we answer, that he made Simon the Zealot and Matthew the publican sit down together at the same table as brothers and as friends."¹

This generation threatens to destroy its own choicest values by the reckless use of violence. Greed creates fear, and fear resorts to violence. If life consists chiefly in grabbing for self, family, nation or race; and if competition and strife are encouraged and stimulated on every level; and if man's genius is prostituted to the search for annihilating weapons; and if the units of combat become more titanic in size and power; then the doom of our civilization is imminent. The futility and menace of ruthlessness are everywhere evident. Hanging and electrocution cannot hold back the crime wave; military and naval preparedness cannot afford security, and only accentuates the danger; suppression of civil liberties, and resort to intimidation and brutality, cannot preserve property rights and safeguard human values in industry. Urgently and desperately, this generation needs an effective alternative for violence.

Here also Jesus' experience of God and his attitude toward men offer an inestimable contribution to modern society. To the degree that men live every day as good members of God's Home, greed and violence disappear. Does this mean, then, that Tolstoy was right in maintaining that every use of force and coercion is contrary to the spirit of Jesus and therefore

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 97.

immoral? That all depends upon whether or not coercion is necessarily a violation of the family spirit. If the answer is in the affirmative, the only consistent philosophy for a follower of Jesus is that of anarchism, and the only logical procedure that of withdrawal from all responsibility for and participation in organized society.

But the evidence does not drive us to such a conclusion. It is possible that coercion may be administered in such a way as to prove restraining and redemptive. Wherever in a home there is immaturity, lack of self-control, and anti-social stimuli, coercion may be necessary in order to safeguard the other members of the family, and to prevent remorse for irreparable wrongdoing. To say that restraint administered in love and with the welfare of all concerned vividly in mind is immoral, is to reduce society to anarchy and chaos.

For many decades to come certain criminals will have to be restrained by force if society is to be safeguarded and they are to be kept from evil-doing. The victims of greed and exploitation will never get justice solely by relying upon the vision and generosity of those who hold power and seek their own gain. Power is blinding and corrupting and causes the slave-owner to imagine that it is his duty to perpetuate slavery. The victims of imperialism, in a world where national egotism and greed are rampant, must resort to coercive action if they are to secure freedom and justice. The British imperialist is conscientious in his determination to continue British rule in India, and Japanese militarists honestly consider themselves to be the saviors of Manchuria. Unless effective non-violent means of coercion can be devised and utilized, the victims of injustice will, in blindness and desperation, take up weapons of violence. In our kind of world, to rely upon anarchy and inaction, is to turn the reins over to violence.

For Study and Meditation: What practical differences would be made in my conduct if I rigorously accepted the ideal that all men are my brothers and ought always to be treated as members of the family? Why do I fail to take brotherhood more seriously?

FIFTH DAY

With this dilemma in mind, let us turn again to Jesus' concept of God and his attitude toward wrongdoers. The God of Jesus is no soft, flabby sentimentalist. Jesus' picture of the judgment scene is terrifying in its severity. His own condemnation of the scribes and Pharisees is one of the most rigorous on record. His indignation flames in the presence of callous hypocrisy and cruelty. His whole life is a burning denunciation of iniquity and an indomitable resistance to evil.

If the family circle is to be extended beyond blood relatives and made to embrace men of all classes and races, effective social organization must be created and maintained by mutual goodwill, supported in emergencies and abnormal instances by ethical and effective restraints. Here we are confronted with one of the most urgent problems of our day. How can society restrain criminals, and restore them to right relations with their fellows, without vengeance in the form of a noose or an electric chair? How can the workers utilize the strike and other forms of economic coercion, and at the same time avoid hatred and violence? How can Mahatma Gandhi exert sufficient pressure through non-violent non-cooperation to secure freedom for India, without stimulating hatred and resorting to violence? How can the League of Nations bring sufficient moral, diplomatic and financial pressure to bear upon Japan to secure withdrawal of her troops from Manchuria and the restoration of political control to China, without precipitating warfare? Failure to find answers to these questions will insure chaos and warfare.

It is obvious that Jesus has no detailed solutions for these modern problems. But he does shed brilliant illumination upon every such critical situation. If true to his way of life, the state will avoid capital punishment and ruthlessness, and will be chiefly concerned with the protection of society and the reclamation of the evildoer. The workers will continue to regard their oppressors as kinsmen, and will refrain from unbrotherly attitudes. They will avoid covetousness and will

be motivated solely by the desire for justice and for a wider sharing of the opportunities for the good life. The people of India will harbor no animosity against the British and will seek no revenge, being driven solely by the desire to secure that freedom which is essential to self-respect, and the independence required for the redemption of India from her iniquities. The supporters of the League of Nations will manifest no bitterness toward Japan, but only a righteous determination to resist military imperialism by effective non-violent sanctions.

Moreover, if Jesus' experience of God and his trust in man can be extended on a wide scale, this generation's ability to refrain from hatred and violence will be increased enormously. The thought that God loves even his enemies, and seeks to restrain them only that he may redeem them, helps to hold men steady in periods of strain and stress. Furthermore, followers of Jesus in our day will, by their compassionate concern for the victims of greed and blindness, be stimulated to search more diligently for means of increased persuasiveness of wrongdoers, on the one hand, and for ethical means of restraint, on the other. They will be prepared also to rely exclusively upon means which are consistent with the worthy ends sought, and to take the consequences of following Jesus' way of life.

Thus we see that Jesus has a notable contribution to make in the building of a new society: his experience of God and teaching concerning God make it easier to recognize the brotherhood of man and to trust in the inherent nobility of human nature; thus erecting a bulwark against hatred and violence, and stimulating a search for non-violent means of restraint. "The contribution of religion to the task of an ethical reconstruction of society," writes Reinhold Niebuhr, "is its reverence for human personality and its aid in creating the type of personality which deserves reverence. Men cannot create a society if they do not believe in each other. They cannot believe in each other if they cannot see the potential in the real facts of human nature. And they cannot have the faith which discovers potentialities if they can-

not interpret human nature in the light of a universe which is perfecting and not destroying personal values."¹

The limitless possibilities before mankind have been portrayed in these words by Richard Roberts: "The truth about man is that, so far, he has never lived more than a fraction of his possible life, and by far the greater part of human nature is unexplored and unrealised. Here and there along the centuries there have been great outgoings of light and fire from these hidden depths, evidence of energies and capacities of which the ordinary man is unaware. Yet the materials are buried in us which might raise the whole of life to dimensions of splendor and glory that would make the best of the past seem but the flicker of a rushlight. Some hints of what this life might be we can gather from the beauty of the Parthenon and the temple of the Wingless Victory, from the vision of prophets and poets who have descried afar off the grandeur of the human promise. You may see it all within the compass of a single life in Jesus of Nazareth. It is no idle dream that sees the whole level of life raised to the height of the high peaks of the past. For the materials of it are here, and God has not yet deserted his world. There is away 'beyond the bound of the waste,' a city of God awaiting its builders, a city whose dwellers shall be poets and prophets and seers, having the mind of Christ, a city of supermen and superwomen who spend their lives in works of love and beauty, and whose city reflects the light of their own loveliness. And that city shall not be left desolate, nor shall time wear down its youth or despoil it of its fairness. It is our task to build that city,—and what is more, we can."²

Experience soon demonstrates that love and forgiveness and non-violence are not always immediately and completely effective in restraining wrongdoers. In such a circumstance, what is an ethical procedure? Shall we resort to violence, on the ground that the end justifies the means? The answer

¹ *Does Civilization Need Religion*, p. 62. By permission of The Macmillan Company, publishers.

² *Op. cit.*, pp. 169, 170.

of Jesus seems conclusive. There is no place in the home for violence—as distinguished from the less extreme forms of coercion—and the killing of a beloved kinsman.

Our difficulty comes, of course, in deciding where ethical coercion ends and unethical violence begins. The only person who is able to escape from this dilemma is the complete anarchist who repudiates every form of restraint and compulsion—and such a man has no solution to offer for the imminently menacing problems of the hour. All other persons are obliged to draw the line somewhere, and orderly progress depends upon the intellectual keenness and ethical sensitiveness with which this situation is confronted.

None of the three ways of dealing with social injustice can entirely prevent or remove human suffering. Resistance by violence tends to increase and intensify suffering; inaction or failure to exert effective restraint perpetuates the misery of the victims of crime or exploitation; non-violent coercion likewise often results in suffering. We are driven, therefore, to the conclusion that, in an imperfect and developing world, suffering is inescapable. The policy of wisdom is to use that method which involves a minimum of suffering, and which offers a maximum of redemption.

For Study and Meditation: Upon what types of unethical restraint and compulsion am I now relying for safety and privilege? What can I do about the matter?

SIXTH DAY

No method of dealing with crime can entirely eliminate suffering. Ruthlessness and capital punishment, on the one hand, and ineffective restraint, on the other, produce terrible havoc. The imprisonment of a criminal likewise causes suffering, to his family and to the man himself. If, however, during the period of separation from society, redemptive processes—physical, educational, moral and spiritual—are brought to bear upon the evildoer, the result may be deliverance from anti-social tendencies or habits, and the restoration of the individual to his family and to society.

Failure to restrain greed and exploitation produces much misery, as does also resort to violent class warfare. The industrial strike likewise may and frequently does cause intense suffering, both to the public and to the strikers. But a non-violent strike may enable the exploited workers to gain more justice and fuller liberation from degradation. In spite of the fact that workers are often goaded to the point of desperation by misery, oppression, and the violent tactics used by employers, violence on their part seems ineffective and unethical. Likewise a strike that results in direct and inescapable starvation seems indefensible.

Imperialist powers are blinded by tradition, prestige and self-interest, and vainly imagine that it is for the good of humanity that they should perpetuate their rule and continue to bear "the white man's burden." Their assumption of superiority and the contemptuous way in which they often treat the "natives" is humiliating and degrading. Sensitive Indians, for example, are at the breaking point, and regard continued British domination as intolerable. Violent revolution is the historic method of handling such an inflammable situation. Mahatma Gandhi's campaign of non-violent non-cooperation is undoubtedly causing much suffering, both in England and in India. It is to be observed, however, that the additional unemployed in British textile areas are not starving, but constitute an extra burden upon the unemployment fund. To the extent that the people of India will follow Gandhi in refraining from hatred and violence, on the one hand, and refusing all cooperation with the British Government, on the other, they will be able to exert effective non-violent pressure upon Great Britain. The strike and the non-violent boycott seem to be more ethical than acquiescence in an evil situation or the use of violence.

The continued military and political control of Manchuria by Japan will inflame Chinese nationalists and fan the flames of militarism and communism, thus causing terrible misery. The use of moral, diplomatic and financial sanctions by the League of Nations would undoubtedly produce suffering, but effective pressure can be exerted in ways that do not cause

starvation. Eventual warfare on a terrible scale between Japan and China cannot be avoided if the former is permitted to seize Manchuria and rule it indefinitely. Nationalism is sweeping China and a more ominous Alsace-Lorraine will be created. Yet Japan will not relinquish control unless coerced by the League of Nations and the United States. Moral condemnation, diplomatic boycott, and an embargo against Japanese silk would be sufficient to compel Japan to relinquish military and political control of Manchuria, with less suffering and more possibilities of a pacific settlement of the whole controversy than would be the case if no effective international restraint is offered, or if violent hostilities are resorted to.

What, then, is the meaning of all this? Is coercion ever consistent with the family spirit, and may it be administered in a manner that is constructive and redemptive, rather than destructive and debasing? I am fully persuaded that the answer is in the affirmative. If this is sound reasoning, Jesus can aid us at three points: by helping us to avoid hatred, to repudiate violence, and to increase our willingness to accept whatever suffering comes from this combination of refusing to submit to evil and of refraining from hatred and violence.

In this setting the cross of Calvary assumes new meaning. Jesus refuses to accept the *status quo*, with all its injustice and misery. He refrains from hatred and violence, but attacks entrenched iniquity with the utmost vigor and abandon, thereby incurring the relentless hostility which results in his own crucifixion and the ruthless persecution of his followers. That is to say, acquiescence and inactivity would have been safer for him, but would not have removed the misery of the people. On the other hand, his non-violent assaults upon evil-doing causes his own early death and produces terrible havoc among his friends. He lives every day as a good member of God's Home, and is nailed to a tree.

The problem confronting present day followers of Jesus can thus be summarized: If we acquiesce in the presence of injustice and misery, we not only fail to remove ex-

plotation and poverty, but we abdicate in favor of those who seek deliverance by violence. On the other hand, if we offer effective non-violent resistance, we may bring suffering upon both evildoers and victims. If we are able to keep ourselves free from bitterness and vindictiveness, our procedure in every situation will be determined by our judgment as to which type of persuasiveness and which method of non-violent restraint are under the circumstances most ethical and most effective. We will then go forward, even if the journey leads to a cross. Without suffering there can be no redemption.

If we are to oppose evildoers, especially if we are to make use of non-violent methods of restraining wrongdoers, we must not only refrain from animosity, but must reveal our devotion to mankind by exhibiting a willingness to endure suffering, rather than submit to the exploitation of our fellows, or to retaliate with weapons of violence. The menace inherent in any form of coercion is greatly reduced if those who act in behalf of the victims of oppression voluntarily submit to suffering. Mahatma Gandhi, of course, furnishes the most illuminating contemporary example of vicarious suffering. He is rigorously resisting British rule because of the deep conviction that freedom is essential to self-respect and the removal of the scourges which afflict the Indian people. To an amazing degree he has risen above hatred and enmity. In seeking liberty for his country, he utterly repudiates violence and war as methods of attaining the passionately desired end. Joyously he suffers imprisonment for his cause.

Concerning a notable twenty-one day fast which Gandhi underwent in penitence for the hatred and violence among Hindus and Moslems, which was frustrating the campaign for political and social freedom, Stanley Jones writes: "On the eighteenth day of the fast, Mr. C. F. Andrews, who was editing Gandhi's paper, *Young India*, while he was fasting, wrote an editorial in which he described Gandhi lying upon his couch on the upper veranda in Delhi, weak and emaciated. He pictured the fort which could be seen

in the distance, reminding them of the struggle for the possession of the kingdom; below the fort Englishmen could be seen going out to their golf; nearer at hand the crowds of his own people surged through the bazaar intent on buying and selling. While Andrews watched him there that verse of Scripture rushed to his mind: 'Is it nothing to you, ye that pass by? Is there any sorrow like unto my sorrow?' He ended it with this sentence: 'As I looked upon him there and caught the meaning of it all, I felt as never before in my own experience the meaning of the cross.' Andrews spoke out in these last sentences the very thought of the heart of India. India has seen the meaning of the cross in one of her sons. As a former fiery opponent of Christianity, a nationalist leader, said, 'I never understood the meaning of Christianity until I saw it in Gandhi.' While this inspires us and we are deeply grateful for it, nevertheless, it is a sword that cuts two ways, for some of us have been there these years and deeply regret that Christianity did not burst into meaning through us."¹

In discussing the manner in which Jesus makes atonement for sinners and leads to reconciliation, Professor Baillie writes: "Surely then our religion is right in holding that vicarious suffering is the most irresistible force that anywhere exists in the spiritual world for the destruction of evil. Surely there is no other power that can do so much to turn us from our sins as another's readiness to suffer pain, humiliation, deprivation and death itself in the effort to win us back to goodness. And I wonder whether it is not in what has sometimes been called 'vicarious penitence' that this power reaches its rare topmost height—when we see another sorrowing for our sins, bowed down and broken with grief over the hold that evil has on us, weeping penitential tears to God in our name. I wonder whether any other element in the sorrows of Christ has been quite so effective unto redemption as this one. . . . And so we are led directly to our third point—the significance of

¹ *The Christ of the Indian Road*, pp. 79, 80. Copyright 1925. Used by permission of The Abingdon Press, publishers.

Christ's redemptive activity towards those around him as spurring us on to a like redemptive activity towards those around ourselves. At least half the meaning of the parable of the Lost Sheep is that *you and I* must seek out lost sheep. At least half the meaning of the parable of the Two Debtors is that *you and I* must call out greater love by showing greater forgiveness. At least half the meaning of the cross is that *you and I* should not grudge our very life's blood in the service of our fellows. . . . In his great wisdom God knew that nothing could avail to redeem us from our sinful ways but the spectacle of One, in whom was the fulness of his own love, suffering a shameful death as a direct result of His passion to redeem us. He knew, in the fine words of Dr. Temple, that 'no man could go on for ever wounding one who bears the blow like that.' And in his great love He provided such a redemption."¹

So we gain illumination as to the immensity of Jesus' contribution in setting before us a vision of the new society, and indicating ways and means of bringing it to pass. By his own experience of God and his estimate of man, by his emphasis upon and practice of brotherhood, by his repudiation of hatred and violence, while attacking with audacity deeply entrenched iniquities, and by his vicarious suffering on the cross, Jesus awakens, challenges and inspires us to take up our cross and follow in his sacrificially redemptive steps. Thus we are saved and thus society must be redeemed.

For Study and Meditation: In what ways, if any, am I suffering, rather than submit to evil or to retaliate with violence? Where am I shrinking from such suffering? Why?

SEVENTH DAY

This, then, is what Jesus can do for this generation: he reveals the quality of love, forgiveness and sacrificial zeal which must characterize God if the Creator is greater than

¹ *Op. cit.*, pp. 167, 170, 182, 183.

the created; he exhibits the grandeur of personality in a way that forever prevents us from casting cynical slurs on human nature; he offers us a high and consuming purpose in the glorious adventure of seeking communion with God and comradeship with man, and the participation as a co-worker in laying the foundations of the City of God; he gives us a vision of the new society and shows us how men ought to live together; he presents us with ways and means of overcoming evil and of redeeming the individual and society; on the cross he incarnates redemptive love, and reveals the triumph of innocence over guilt; his living presence challenges, inspires and sustains us as we take up our cross and strive to live day by day as good members of God's Home.

And so, when we are told that the record is scanty and unreliable, we can reply, with the support of the highest scholarship, that we know enough to be sure of his basic ideas and experiences, and that his personality looms up more brilliantly than the Morning Star. When we are reminded of his apocalyptic concepts and are told that an interim ethic possesses little validity for distant centuries, we are able to make rejoinder that his experience of God, his valuation of man, his call to love, forgiveness, and sacrifice are universal and eternal.

Concerning this point Dr. Rittelmeyer writes: "The expectation of the fast-approaching dissolution of the world, for instance, did Jesus great service: it saved him from embroilment in matters of State and thus from becoming a politician; it prevented him from specializing in intellectual questions and thus from becoming a dogmatist; it prevented him from drawing up a program for the regulating of life in its details and thus from becoming a person in practical affairs. . . . Although single sayings of Jesus might be transitory, and single words might become obsolete, we have beheld the abiding Reality which used these words and conceptions temporarily in order that it might come to manifestation in that age. The sunlight can be reflected in changing waters and yet itself not change, but remain the

same sunlight. In the brook that passes one can see a sun that does not pass, a sun that will reflect itself in ever new brooks. Jesus would use other words to-day. He would think in other terms. But the stand he would take in the world would be no other than the stand he took then."¹

When emphasis is placed upon the simple and circumscribed nature of the society in which he dwelt, we can point out that the need for an abiding experience of God is even greater in an urban civilization; insight into the inherent nobility of man is more urgently required; the grace of forgiveness is more essential and the willingness to make sacrifices is more necessary.

When we are told that he possessed little originality and that most of his teaching may be paralleled by passages which antedated him, we reply that his originality is found in his own personality and in the way he illumines his words by his manner of teaching and by his mode of life. Dr. Deissmann has admirably summarized this point of view: "I would say that the originality of Jesus lies in his whole personality, in the peculiar energy of his experience of the living God. It is not his concepts that are original, but his power; not his formulae, but his confessions; not his dogmas, but his faith; not his system, but his personality. The originality of Jesus lies in the comprehensive uniqueness of his inner life; the new, the epoch-making thing, is himself."²

Moreover, we do not need to concede too much to those who would discount the originality of Jesus. Listen to the testimony of three modern Jewish writers:

If we omitted the miracles and a few mystical sayings which tend to deify the Son of man, and preserved only the moral precepts and parables, the Gospels would count as one of the most wonderful collections of ethical teaching in the world . . . Jesus surpassed Hillel in his ethical ideals . . . In his ethical code there is a sublimity, distinctiveness and originality in form unparalleled in any other Hebrew ethical

¹ *Op. cit.*, pp. 105, 125.

² Adolf Deissmann, *The Religion of Jesus and the Faith of Paul*, p. 149. By permission of Ray Long & Richard R. Smith, Inc., publishers.

code; neither is there any parallel to the remarkable art of his parables. The shrewdness and sharpness of his proverbs and his forceful epigrams serve, in an exceptional degree, to make ethical ideas a popular possession. If ever the day should come and this ethical code be stripped of its wrappings of miracles and mysticism, the Book of the Ethics of Jesus will be one of the choicest treasures in the literature of Israel for all time.¹

In studying Jesus, men are always conscious that new ground is being broken—or rather perhaps that old ground is broken with new energy. Into simple and unforgettable words Jesus poured the grand truths of religion. They are not exactly like any other collection of rabbinical *obiter dicta*, although they have much in common with, say, such a Talmudic treatise as the *Ethics of the Fathers* (*Pirke Aboth*). But there is a difference. Not that Jesus said anything entirely new. With a clearness and simplicity unmatched perhaps by any Jewish teacher he brought out several aspects of the deeper spiritual significance of the religion of his fathers. More than that: he gave these thoughts a power they never had before . . . there stands out of the Sermon the personality of a Man that is altogether unique. Any attempt to minimize his towering faith seems to be born of an incapacity to realize that here was, in the fullest sense, a creative soul."²

Professor Simkhovitch, outstanding historian of Columbia University, writes:

To me personally it seems childish not to see in Christ's teachings an overwhelming intellectual system. The towering parts that are its components are parts of the same system, not independent units. The truth of the insight, the cohesion of the system were self-evident to Christ; so much so that he knew that they had an absolute quality; that is, coming from God . . . In his teachings, his ministry, entirely apart from any of his other functions or qualities, the one thing that stands out monumentally is his intellectual grandeur, and the purity and unswerving consistency of its simple straight lines.³

¹ Joseph Klausner, *op. cit.*, pp. 381, 397, 414.

² E. R. Trattner, *op. cit.*, pp. 92, 94.

³ V. G. Simkhovitch, *op. cit.*, pp. 71, 73.

When we are reminded that modern men find it difficult to believe in the divinity of Jesus, we urge a search for realities that are greater than words. If Jesus gives us our clearest vision of the nature of God; if he reveals the godlike qualities in man; if he secures penitence, restitution, joyous allegiance, and heroic sacrifice; if he leads to deliverance for individuals and groups—he becomes the symbol of all that is noblest in the universe, whatever may be the title by which he is characterized. Carlyle once exclaimed: "Our divinest symbol. Higher has the human thought not yet reached. A symbol of quite perennial, infinite character; whose significance will ever demand to be anew inquired into, and anew made manifest. . . . It is a height to which the human species were fated and enabled to attain, from which, having once attained it, they can never retrograde."¹

The height and the depth of the wisdom and love and devotion of Jesus can be discovered only by progressively fulfilling the conditions of such an insight. The beauty of a rose can never be appreciated by concentrating upon a microscopic analysis of one petal. The glory of a sunset cannot be experienced by minute examination of light rays through a spectroscope. Love in its highest form cannot be apprehended through biological and psychological investigation. Dr. Rittelmeyer well says: "Books enough have been written upon Jesus for us to know what results from that method which professes to take a coldly scientific view of Jesus—it is in truth a method soulless and without understanding. This coldly scientific approach is just the best way to miss the truth of history."²

Modern science does not enable us to dispose of Jesus as a misguided and outgrown fanatic of an earlier century. The simple truth is that he is so far ahead of us and so high above us that this generation regards his teaching as impracticable and Utopian. Well may George Mathewson exclaim: "Son of Man, whenever I doubt of life, I think of Thee. Nothing is so impossible as that Thou shouldest be dead. I

¹ Quoted by Sir James Marchant, *Anthology of Jesus*, pp. 292, 315. By permission of Harper & Brothers, publishers.

² *Op. cit.*, pp. 134, 135.

can imagine the hills to dissolve in vapor and the stars to melt in smoke, and the rivers to empty themselves in sheer exhaustion: but I feel no limit in Thee. Thou never growest old to me. Last century is old, last year is an obsolete fashion, but Thou art not obsolete. Thou art abreast of all the centuries. I have never come up with Thee, modern as I am."¹

And the supreme and ultimate significance of Jesus for this generation is found in his living presence. "From the very beginning," writes Professor Baillie, "Christian piety has thought and spoken of Christ not merely as One who once lived among us on earth and now lives away from us in some more blessed state of being, but as One who can still be present with us, dwelling in our hearts. It is well known, for instance, how this conception of the inward Christ—of 'Christ in me'—lies right at the centre of St. Paul's religion. . . . I think if you had suggested to St. Paul that 'Christ in me' is only another name for the immanence of God, he would have replied that he had believed in the immanence of God ever since he could remember, and that even the Stoic teachers of his native Tarsus believed in it, but that, since he came to know Christ, the presence in his heart was somehow different from what it had ever been before, and different, certainly, from anything a Stoic had ever known. But on the other hand I think that if you had suggested to him that in that case there were two presences in his heart—the indwelling God and the indwelling Christ—he would have said that these presences were not two but one. He who indwelt in Paul's heart, and whose indwelling constituted Paul's Christianity, was neither Christ as realised apart from God nor God as known apart from Christ, but only God as manifest in Christ. . . . Here then the necessary clarification seems to have been made. Jesus Christ is not another name for God, but the name of a Man in whom God was, and through whom God came to meet us. The Presence which indwells in the Christian's soul is always this

¹ Quoted by Charles W. Gilkey, *Jesus and Our Generation*, p. 166. By permission of University of Chicago Press, publishers.

God whom through Jesus we found. On the one hand, it is not a God whom we can satisfyingly know in any other way than through Jesus; for nowhere else than in Jesus has He been satisfyingly present in our world. Nor, on the other hand, is it Jesus Himself, regarded in his separate human self-hood; but only that in him which was God in him. This Presence we may variously speak of as God the Father or as the Holy Spirit or as the Inward and Living Christ, according as Christian feeling and Christian liturgical use may in different instances dictate."¹

If men of our age will saturate themselves daily in the mind of Christ, will vividly recall the nobility of his manner of life, and will spend time in conscious communion with the God he so luminously reveals, life will take on richer meanings, and the task of building the new society will become more joyous and challenging. For men in every age, Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life.

In a memorable paragraph, Dr. Fosdick has summarized the significance of Jesus: "There is always something unbelievable about the greatest lives, so that if some one in advance had narrated the story of Chinese Gordon or of Adoniram Judson or of Abraham Lincoln it would have seemed impossible. But of all the astounding careers with which we have to deal, where is there anything comparable with Christ's? If someone had told us beforehand that some day a baby would be born in a cattle shed, be brought up in a carpenter's home, working at the household trade until he was a full-grown man; that then he would teach his people at the most for three years, until he died at thirty-three; that he would raise no armies, organize no institutions, write no books, hold no office; that he would be poor and unfriended, called 'beside himself' by his family, a heretic by his church, a traitor by his nation; and that at last he would be taken outside the walls of the city which he loved and there be crucified as a felon between thieves: if anybody had told us that two thousand years afterward there would be

¹ John Baillie, *op. cit.*, pp. 195, 196, 201.

no land on earth where men and women were not gladly laying down their lives for the privilege of telling people about him, that men like George Bernard Shaw, rebellious, cynical, would be saying, 'I am ready to admit that after contemplating the world and human nature for nearly sixty years, I see no way out of the world's misery but the way which would have been found by Christ's will if he had undertaken the work of a practical statesman,' and that seers like Browning would be singing of him:

'The very God! think, Abib; dost thou think?
So, the All-Great, were the All-Loving too'

if anybody had told us this in advance how impossible it would have seemed! But it is true; it actually has happened; the fact is here. To many of us it is the most considerable fact that ever took place on this planet."¹

Jesus' vision of God and man and life ought to be true! Believing it to be valid, he risked everything for it. Here and there through the ages men and women, following in his steps, have trusted utterly in that vision and have experienced joys indescribable and triumphs beyond their dreams. The barrenness and cruelty and misery of this generation now cry aloud for God-saturated and Jesus-challenged deliverers.

For Study and Meditation: To what degree am I striving to live every day as a good member of God's Home? What more can I do?

¹ Harry Emerson Fosdick, *op. cit.*, pp. 210, 211.

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. List several basic changes in our present social order which would quickly be made if the attitudes of Jesus toward God, man and life were dominant today. Give reasons for including the respective items listed.

2. How valid do you regard Jesus' ideas concerning God? Explain your answer.

3. How fully do you accept His evaluation of human nature? To what extent is it now practicable for us to reproduce His attitudes toward men and women of various races, nationalities, and classes?

4. Just how practicable is it today for us to seek *first* the Kingdom of God? Give reasons.

5. What is wrong, if anything, with struggling to secure luxuries and privileges? Is it right for a man to endeavor to save enough so that his children will never know want? Be realistic in your answers.

6. Evaluate the significance of the following statement: "I expect to make a fortune, and then use the money in the service of humanity."

7. Is restraint or coercion inherently and essentially unethical? If so, why? If not, why not?

8. To what extent do you agree with the point of view expressed in the material for the fourth, fifth, and sixth days of the present study? Wherein do you differ with that position?

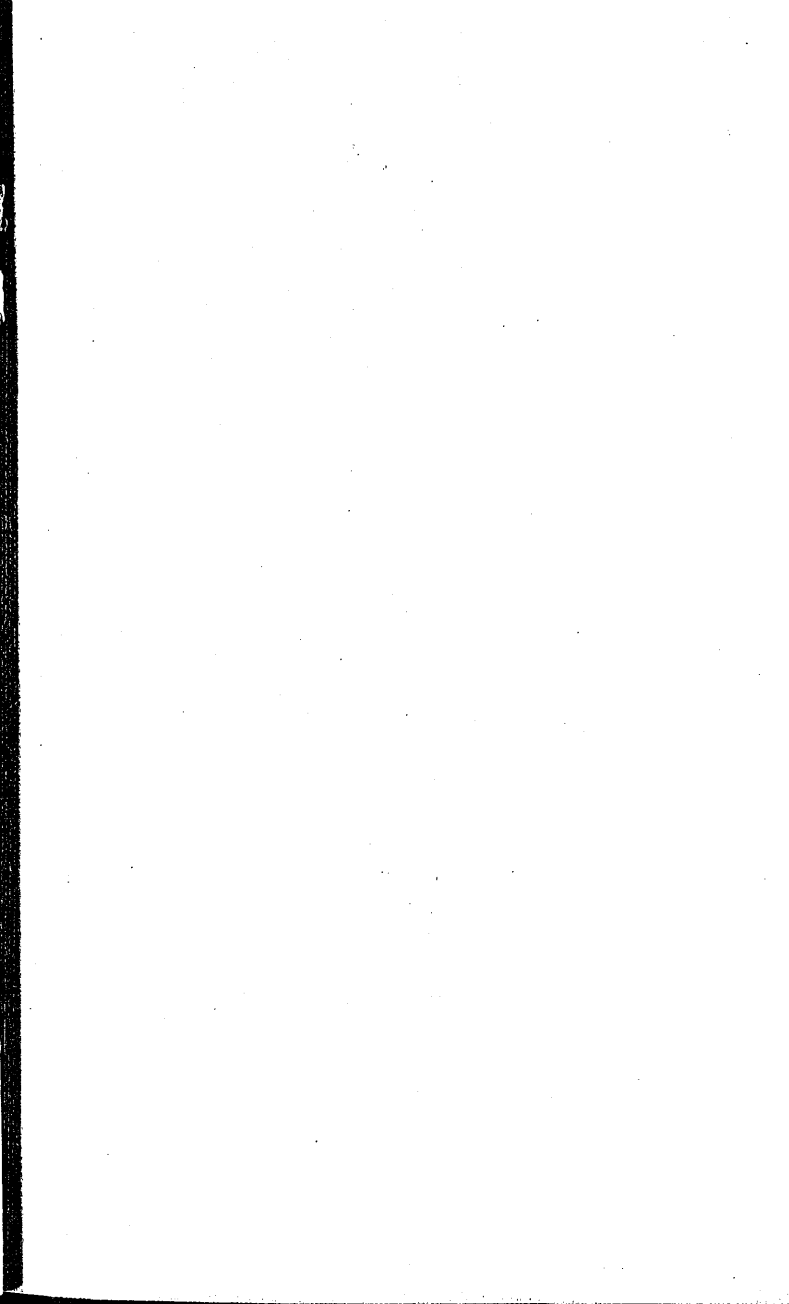
9. Explain briefly and simply just what contribution Jesus is making to your own life at the present time.

10. To what degree are you striving to live today as if the ideal society is already here?

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5. Henry Sloane Coffin, *The Meaning of the Cross*, pp. 127-164.
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(The books listed above may be purchased from Association Press.)



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